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STUDIES IN EARLY INDIAN THOUGHT

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BY

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PREFACE

THIS book has been written in India and some parts of it have formed material for lectures given by the author at and near Bangalore. It has been her hope to interest those whose profession or calling has brought them into personal contact with the natives of India by an account of the influence still exercised by early Indian literature on the Indian thought of the present day. She hopes too that some English readers may be interested in the book, and that Indian students may care to have an account of the impression made by the ancient literature of their country on an English student of comparative religion. She owes thanks for advice and help to many friends in India, and special thanks to Professor Rapson, Professor of Sanskrit in the University of Cambridge, who has been so good as to read the proof-sheets. She wishes also to express her thanks to her publishers at the University Press for much kind help, which her absence from England has made specially valuable to her.

September, 1918.

TO

K. S. AND R. E. S.

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STUDIES IN EARLY INDIAN THOUGHT

CHAPTER I

THE DIVINE NATURE IN THE RIGVEDA

INTRODUCTION

THE object of this essay is to follow the course of Indian thought from the Vedic period to the period of the Bhagavadgītā, to find what account it gives of the world, of men, and of that power of which the world and men are the outcome. We shall trace this course by means of Indian literature, taking it in three stages, that of the Vedas, of the Upanishads, and of the Bhagavadgītā itself.

These books contain the record of the best thought of India on the subjects most vital to it from the earliest time till now. They are closely connected with each other. The Vedic hymns are the earliest literature of the race. They were used at sacrifices, and in order to adapt them for that purpose the Brāhmaṇas were compiled. These are practically commentaries, giving explanations and directions, and their last chapters are the Āraṇyakas, or 'Forest Books,' intended for the Sages, who had left the

world and retired to the forest. The last chapters of the Āraṇyakas are the Upanishads, which are concerned with the search for the truth behind the ritual. These writings arose in various places, and among different schools, and they differ among themselves; but there is a general likeness among them, which may be taken to show what is characteristically Indian. Finally the Bhagavadgītā is founded on the Upanishads, and gathers up the various streams of thought which appear in them. It is thus the flower of the whole process; and it remains to this day the standard expression of Indian thought.

Although we propose to trace the thought of India through books, the books of the Aryan race, we have always to remember that India does not only mean the Aryans, nor is the line of thought opened to us in these books the only line followed, even among them. All Aryans were not philosophers in search of the truth. Some were in search of a protector, some merely in search of amusement; and the epic poems grew up at the same time as the philosophical treatises. But there are also the Dravidians to be remembered. The thoughts and practices of the conquered people have affected the thoughts and practices of the conquerors. The worship of spirits in stones and trees, of heroes, of snakes, of mountains, and the superstitions of the jungle tribes go on, recognised and sanctioned by

Hinduism, absorbed into its system; but, if we may judge by similar ways of thought in other countries, they remain very much the same as they were when the Aryans first came over the mountains. The mark made on the lower religion by the higher is external. The local godling becomes the son of Çiva or Vishṇu, or a form of Parvatī; and there the matter ends. The ritual and the thought, or belief that moulds the ritual, go on as before. On the other hand, the mark of the lower religion on the higher is internal: the ideas on which it was founded are taken up and assimilated, and what was unconscious in the lower race is realised and worked out in the higher.

The present work is an essay, not an encyclopedia; and much will have to be left out—the Dravidians, with all the theories and problems, old and new, which gather about the mention of their name, and which may yet require us to revise from the beginning our accepted ideas of Indian society, the Epics, the Protestant movements of the Buddhists and Jains, and much else. Nor shall we have occasion to dwell on the Brāhmaṇas, which are the record less of thought than of practice; but the beliefs of the unthinking masses of the people will force themselves on our attention from time to time, for the reason that they provide the raw material of which thought is made.

Indian religion is tolerant, as Chinese religion is tolerant, even more so. A Chinaman may hold three religions at once: the Indian combines them; and when their fundamental ideas are contradictory, he holds both. Thus it is held according to one set of views that the dead pass into a new life on earth, in a new body, human or otherwise, and that this process depends on a fixed law as to merit, from which there is no possible appeal. It is held, according to another system, that the dead pass into a world beyond this one, where they depend for support on the living. Çrāddha ceremonies must be performed for the repose and well-being of at least three generations of ancestors; and it is of the first importance for every man to have a son, because only a son can perform these ceremonies. The two sets of ideas are quite irreconcilable, and they are never reconciled; but they go on side by side, in full vigour, in the same family, and in the same individual.

We must touch for a moment on the question of date. The Vedas belong to the time of the first Aryan settlements. Tribes of Aryan invaders were probably settled in India in the second half of the second millennium B.C., that is to say, in the period from about 1500 to about 1000 B.C.—roughly speaking, the time of the settlement of Israel in Egypt, the Exodus, and the Judges. It is generally agreed

that we can say that the early Vedic period came to an end at about 1000 B.C.[1]

The Rigveda is the acknowledged foundation of Indian thought. Of the other three collections, the Sāma and Yajur Vedas are only adaptations of it for liturgical purposes; and the Atharva Veda is altogether different, consisting of a collection of spells, which are probably older than the hymns of the Rigveda, together with theosophical speculations, which are later. It has very likely a closer connection with the Dravidian view of life than with the Āryan; and it has not quite the same authority as the three other Vedas. We are therefore concerned here only with the Rigveda.

To the Rigveda then we shall go to find out what the earliest Indian view was of the world and of the divine power that rules it; and we shall find in it several different lines of thought. But in these earliest days one conception is missing which is later one of the most marked in India. The divine nature has no unity. Now one God, and now another, is hailed as supreme; but his supremacy is only a matter of compliment at the moment, not of essence. There is an obscure indication that at some point Varuṇa occupied a chief place in the regard of his worshippers, which he lost to Indra; but we have no distinct myth or legend on the subject, only a

[1] Macdonell, *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 12.

reference to the fact in a few hymns[1]. Neither Indra nor Varuṇa holds the place in India that Zeus held in Greece as father of gods and men. They are greeted, and so are others, as supreme, or first, or as being worshipped by the others; but we never, as a matter of fact, see them giving orders, or holding conversations with other gods, except in the most general terms. Indra and the Maruts appear as having had a quarrel[2], which, seeing that they represent rain and storm, is perhaps not surprising; but by the time the hymn begins it is already over, and we hear no details. Nor do we hear the actual story of Varuṇa's fall, so as to gain an idea of the nature of Indra's supremacy. Indeed if we are left with the impression that Indra is supreme at all, it is only because there are more hymns addressed to him than to any one else. The idea of ultimate unity was reached at last, but not by the exaltation of any god above the rest, not in connection with the Vedic gods at all.

The eleven hundred and twenty-eight hymns of the Rigveda lie before us like a vast sea, full of currents and cross currents. Of these we shall distinguish nine; and we shall find that they fall into three groups, representing roughly the views of three classes of men, the poet, the priest, and the philosopher.

[1] iv. 42. vii. 82. vii. 85. x. 124. [2] i. 165. i. 171.

The poet, the man who looks at the world, and tries to tell what he sees, recognises the divine nature:

as the source of the moral law;
as the source of physical law;
as the principle of physical life.

The priest who is concerned to know how he is to deal with what he sees, recognises it:

as the source of material prosperity;
as itself the priest;
as itself the sacrifice.

The philosopher, who is looking for the truth behind the visible things, seeks it:

as an abstraction;
as the one behind the many;
as the ultimate, the unknowable source of being.

THE DIVINE NATURE AS THE SOURCE OF MORAL LAW

We consider first the divine as the source of the moral law, and the reason why we take this view first is that there seems to be some reason to think that it is the oldest, and represents a line of thought that was about to be abandoned. We shall not find this particular way of looking at things again; and the worship of Varuṇa, the god who especially

belongs to it, is changed for that of Indra, the god of material prosperity.

The idea appears only in a small group of hymns addressed to Varuṇa, in which he appears in his peculiar character as the god of righteousness, as well as the maker of the world. His worshipper is the rishi Vasishṭha, who confesses that sin has alienated him from Varuṇa, but is not sure what sin, though he is deeply conscious of the inward discord resulting from it, and suggests a variety of the commonest sins. He feels that he is in bondage, but looks forward to a speedy and easy release. He pleads for forgiveness:

It was not our own will, O Varuṇa, it was seduction, strong drink, passion, dice, carelessness;
The elder is a stumbling-block to the younger, and not even sleep keeps lying away. vii. 86, 6.

We do not find this distinct self-accusation again. In another hymn Vasishṭha admits that he has sinned, but without going into particulars:

What has become of those friendships of ours, that we once shared, free of offence?...
Since thine ally of old is dear to thee, O Varuṇa, though he has sinned, let him be thy friend. vii. 88, 5, 6.

Elsewhere it appears that sin has been committed; but the tone of regret and compunction has disappeared:

Whatever law of thine, O divine Varuṇa, we as men transgress day by day,

Do not consign us to slaughter and destruction when thou art offended, to wrath when thou art angry....

Pull off our upper cord, untie the middle one, drop the lowest one that we may live. i. 25, 1, 2, 21.

In a great many hymns Varuṇa appears as the punisher of sin in general, but the singer is conscious of no guilt in himself. Varuṇa, with his companions, Aryaman and Mitra, are:

Bonds of the liar, with many snares, which are hard for the wicked man to escape. vii. 65, 3.

But the wicked man is only any wicked man. There are, however, at least two instances of hymns, not addressed to Varuṇa, in which sins are confessed, and described, so that we may be sure that they are not only ritual, but moral, sins. In one case the waters are called on to remove the sin of having injured anyone, cursed, or lied[1]; in the other the hymn is to be an expiation for sins committed against the gods, friends, or the chieftain[2]. In these instances it again appears that the singer is himself the sinner. There are a few more scattered instances of the same thing; but, on the whole, the sense of sin lies lightly on these ancient singers, nor does it develop in the course of the Vedic period—in fact rather the contrary; for Varuṇa, who diminishes in importance, is the most moral of the gods. Morality marks the difference between a person and a force:

[1] i. 23, 22. [2] i. 185, 8.

a force merely acts without choice, but a person chooses. Varuṇa, therefore, is the only really personal god in the Veda; and when he disappears, the Divine is no more the source of moral law, but is thought of as the source of physical law, the principle of order.

THE DIVINE NATURE AS THE SOURCE OF PHYSICAL LAW

This sense of the divine as the principle of order is very strong in the Rigveda; we are shown the universe founded on law (*ṛita*), moving in it:

> The foundations of order are strong, many graces are in its beauty. iv. 23, 9.

The sun obeys it, heaven and earth exist according to it, and all living things. Varuṇa with Mitra and Aryaman are still its special deities:

> Truthful, born in truth, exalting truth, terrible enemies of falsehood,
> In their favour, the best defence, may we and our lords abide. vii. 66, 13.

But this is not truth of thought. The sphere of *ṛita* is, in the first place, the material world. We see a majestic law, and heaven and earth following it. Man falls into his place as a fragment of the general scheme, he finds safety in obeying; but it is not in the human heart that the law is most fully revealed. It is more concerned with astronomy than

with character, and it is also closely bound up with the sacrifice; for in the Vedic view, as we shall see later, the cosmic order depended on the right performance of sacrifice. We can see an example of this in the most famous of the many hymns to Ushas, the Dawn[1]. In it the arrival of morning is described with great beauty and pathos, as the singer thinks of the endless succession of dawns past and to come, of all those who wake, and those who wake no more; and his words are as true and as moving to-day as on that distant morning when he watched the sunrise, while the fires were being kindled all over the land for the morning sacrifice. He goes on to the thought of the law from which dawn comes, and which, he says, she protects, and of the bounty she supplies in response to the songs of the priests; and the hymn ends with a prayer for wealth. Higher than this the hymn does not take us.

THE DIVINE NATURE AS THE PRINCIPLE OF PHYSICAL LIFE

From the thought of the divine power as Law, we pass to that of the divine power as Life. It now appears, not as a controlling force from without, but as a vitalising force within. This conception occupies more space than any other in the Veda, indeed it is Pantheism, and is the most permanent element

[1] i. 113.

in all Hindu thought. We find it everywhere. Thus Agni is

> The light of all, the germ of existence. When he was born, filled earth and heaven. x. 45, 6.

Or we are told of Sūrya:

> The bright face of the gods has risen, the eye of Mitra, Varuṇa and Agni; he has filled heaven and earth, the soul of what moves or is still. i. 115, 1.

And so on, in countless instances. The divine nature is the ocean of vitality, in which particular men, animals, plants, rocks, and also gods, are only drops—passing forms, embodying the great power from which they rise for a moment, and then falling back into it; all alike, and all equally the outward expressions of one and the same force. Whatever outward appearances may suggest there is no independent existence among them. There is life, but not purpose. The gods are still credited with human forms in these hymns. They drive in their chariots, they wear armour and ornaments, their bodily appearance is fully described; but they have no power of choice, and therefore no moral character. They are concerned with material things, they make the sun rise, and they bring the rain. They take no part in affairs of love and war on their own account (we are speaking of the Vedas only, not the Epics), though Indra may be drawn to one side or the other by the wise use of hymns. They are

not immoral, like the gods of Greece, nor are they moral; for we cannot count as morality the liberality of earth and sky, the giving of wealth and abundance, and these only in return for sacrificial offerings, gifts of ghi and soma with hymns and ceremonial.

The gods follow the course of order with the untroubled regularity of stars or seasons, and through them flows the stream of vitality, which prudent men turn towards themselves. With all this, we have in the hymns such a keen delight in the beauty of nature, its greatness, its splendour and its pathos, that, even when we meet it in the chilly medium of a translation, our attention is caught, and in the pleasure of the moment we are sometimes ready to read into the poetry ideas that are not actually there; for those to whom such words as law, order, and life have other and fuller meanings than they had for the rishis translate the thoughts of the modern world into the poetry of the ancient world, a process which is just to neither.

It is a relief when the pretence of personality is dropped, as happens sometimes in the hymns to Agni and those to the Maruts, and we have the plain literal description of raging fire and whirling storm rushing heavenwards or earthwards, leaping flames devouring and hissing, laying low the forest, bright and golden and always young; or of the rain pelting down with destruction in its path and

a blessing to follow[1]. If only the love of fact had been added to the sense of beauty, if the poet had seen that fact is more beautiful than fancy, there would be no finer songs in the world; but no nation has all the gifts at once.

This view of life finds its fullest expression in one of the three greatest hymns of the Rigveda. It is almost too well known to quote but it is a complete summary of the teaching at which we have arrived.

1. In the beginning the golden Germ came into being, he was the one born lord of all that is. He upheld earth and this heaven. To what god must we offer sacrifice?

2. Who gives life, who gives strength, whose command all creatures and the gods obey, whose shadow is immortality, whose shadow is death. To what god must we offer sacrifice?

3. Who indeed was king of the breathing living world by his might, who rules over these men and beasts. To what god must we offer sacrifice?

4. By whose might are these snowy mountains, the great waters and the stream, they say; of whom these regions are the arms. To what god must we offer sacrifice?

5. By whom the sky is terrible, and the earth firm, by whom the firmament stands, who put the clouds between heaven and earth. To what god must we offer sacrifice?

6. To whom heaven and earth, standing firm, look up for protection, awe-struck; over whom the risen sun shines. To what god must we offer sacrifice?

7. The great waters went everywhere, holding the germ, generating fire; thence arose the one life of the gods. To what god must we offer sacrifice?

[1] i. 58. viii. 20 and others.

8. Who looked by his power over the waters around, holding energy, generating sacrifice, who above the gods was one god. To what god must we offer sacrifice?

9. May he not hurt us, generator of earth, true law-giver, who brought forth heaven; and who brought forth the great shining waters. To what god must we offer sacrifice?

The last verse is thought by some to be a later addition:

O Prajāpati, by no other than thee have all these been begotten; the things we desire as we sacrifice to thee may we have; may we be lords of riches.

THE DIVINE NATURE AS THE SOURCE OF MATERIAL PROSPERITY

So far we have followed the thought of the poet, the man who looks at the world as he finds it, and states what he sees. We now turn to the line of thought which we have associated with the priest. A priest in the ancient world is a man who acts for others in the sacrifice, a mediator between men and gods. It seems that sacrifice has in it four ideas, which appear among different races in various proportions: sometimes it is a magical process which secures prosperity, or it is a tribute to the god who is lord of the soil, or it is a propitiation for sin, or it is the means of strengthening the bond of a common nature between the god and his worshipper. The idea of paying tribute does not appear in the Vedic sacrifice, perhaps the land was too fertile

everywhere to give rise to the notion that certain places were the peculiar dwelling-place of some special god; the idea of propitiation is only found in those few passages where repentance appears—on the whole it is markedly absent; the idea of a common nature does appear, but with a peculiar character which we shall notice presently. It is the first idea, that sacrifice secures prosperity, that it either enables or compels the gods to do their work in making earth fruitful and keeping off enemies, which holds by far the largest place in the hymns.

The idea is found in all races and at all times as well as in Vedic India. The Brāhmans have no monopoly of it; but they have carried it out with more consistency than most people. It is therefore difficult to choose illustrations of it: it appears in most of the references chosen to illustrate other subjects. Every god is appealed to in turn—even Varuṇa is no exception[1]—but it is in the appeal to Indra that there is least admixture of any other motive.

We have taken thy right hand, O Indra, longing for riches; rich lord of riches, we know thee, lord of cows; hero, give us varied wealth of cows and bulls. x. 47, 1.

The deity is sometimes well scolded for not being active enough in the matter:

[1] vii. 88, 1.

If I might reign, O Indra, as thou, I, the giver of wealth, should want to enrich my worshipper;
I would not leave him to misery. vii. 32, 18.

Here is another, sufficiently outspoken:

Giver of much, give much, bring us not little, bring much; surely, Indra, thou wishest to give much. iv. 32, 4.

Sometimes the poet becomes vindictive:

Slay him who brings no oblation, hard to reach, not pleasing to thee.
To us give his wealth: this is what thy worshippers expect. i. 176, 4.

In passing let me recommend anyone who is too much depressed by this display of unblushing greed, to turn to the hymn to Liberality, where we read the praises of a generous spirit and of kindness to the poor sung with genuine feeling; for

truly the wealth of the liberal man does not waste, truly there is no comforter for the miser. x. 117, 1.

Though the love of money has been the besetting sin of the Brāhmans from time immemorial, yet there is no land in which the duty of providing for one's own family has been more faithfully observed than in India. But so far as the Rigveda is to be taken to represent the mind of the race, there can be no doubt that an enormous proportion of the attention of the worshipper, and especially of the priest, was directed to material things. Indra, the special provider of wealth, is scolded, coaxed, flattered,

supplied with Soma, in pails, in rivers, in lakes, in oceans, in order that he may give more abundantly. It is a matter of complete indifference what his personal character is: he is not a person, he is not something higher than a man, nor yet so high, he is not much more than a money-bag, with the strings in the hands of the priests. There is, however, a strange transformation in store for Indra, as we shall see later.

THE DIVINE NATURE AS PRIEST

The divine nature as Priest is seen chiefly in the person of Agni. He appears constantly as the greatest of priests, who knows all the rules, the cheerful, wise priest in every house, beautiful, with ruddy face and flaming hair, beloved by all. His priesthood consists in his being the messenger between the gods and men. He goes up from the altar, taking the gifts of men, and brings down the gods themselves to accept the offerings of Soma, and to bestow the coveted wealth. The same ideas are repeated in hymn after hymn, with endless variety of phrase. The opening words of the Rigveda will do as an example of the rest:

1. I hail Agni, the priest of the sacrifice, the shining priest, the invoker, supreme abode of riches;

2. Agni praised by the former rishis and indeed by the living, may he bring the gods hither.

3. Through Agni may we attain day by day wealth and plenty, bringing fame and many sons.
4. O Agni, that inviolate sacrifice which thou surroundest on all sides, it alone goes to the gods.
5. Agni, invoker, discerner, true, of most wonderful fame, may he come, a god among the gods. i. 1, 1–5.

Bṛihaspati, Savitri, the Açvins, Viçvakarman, and even Indra act as priests[1]. In one hymn we have an account of the gods making the world by means of sacrifice, from the various sacred metres, according to the model observed by the priests on earth[2]. This hymn throws much light on the Indian view of sacrifice, as not necessarily a means of communication between gods and men, but something which is incumbent on the gods themselves, quite independently of men, and on which the existence of the world depends.

THE DIVINE NATURE AS SACRIFICE

And this divine nature acts not only as priest, but as sacrifice; and when we reach this point we seem, as often happens in the study of Indian thought, to be coming very near to Christian doctrine. And then at the moment when we expect to see it unfold before us, we find the path turn, and lead us in the opposite direction.

We find the divine nature giving itself for the

[1] ii. 24, 9. v. 81, 1. viii. 10, 2. viii. 21, 1, 2. x. 81, 1.
[2] x. 130.

life of the world in three forms. The first of these is the Soma, by means of which the gods, and especially Indra, are strengthened for their work. But the Soma is not a mere drink, not even a sacramental drink; it is a god. One hymn gives us a list of gods, Indra, Rudra, Vishṇu and others, described by riddles; and the first of these is Soma,

> a youth, brown, changeful, and merry. viii. 29, 1.

Elsewhere wisdom, omniscience, a heart and a mind are attributed to Soma[1]. The language used about him eludes us. Often it is only descriptive: we hear about the process of making Soma, the pressing-stones, the woollen filter, the vats. Often it is allegorical, and might be matched by the drinking-songs of any nation. But from time to time we have this suggestion, that the Soma is at least as much a person as the other gods; so that, in being offered for their refreshment, he is giving himself. It is a passing thought, but it is there.

The divine nature appears again in the Sacred Horse, whose sacrifice is minutely described in two hymns, i. 162 and 163. The conception appears here with an added touch of feeling; for, whether or not we are to think of Soma as a real person, there is no doubt that the horse is quite a real horse. His sacrifice was one of the great events of the

[1] viii. 79, 4. ix. 1. ix. 28, 1. ix. 65, 29. ix. 66, 1.

Vedic world, and lingers among us in shadowy fashion still, when horses are led in procession at the Dassera ceremonies. In these two hymns we have a detailed account both of the ritual of the sacrifice, and of the thought that guided it. We hear about the post to which the victim was tied, the hatchet that killed him, the way the body was divided, the way in which every fragment was accounted for, the approval of the worshippers who ate him. He is praised and honoured with every endearing term, and is assured that he likes being sacrificed very much indeed, and has joined his heavenly companions who draw the chariots of the gods. But he is not only an offering to the gods, he is also divine, and god-descended. In one verse we are told that:

> given by Yama, harnessed by Trita only, mounted first only by Indra, the Gandharva seized his bridle, the Vasus made the horse from the sun.

and in the next:

> Thou art Yama, thou art Āditya, O Horse, thou art Trita by secret working...thou seemest to me to be Varuṇa.... i. 163, 2, 3.

But the horse is not the highest divine victim. In one of the hymns of the tenth book there is an obscure verse, in which we dimly see the self-sacrifice of the divine life:

> He who for the gods' sake chose death, he who for man's sake did not choose immortality,

Bṛihaspati the rishi was made a sacrifice, Yama gave up his precious body. x. 13, 4.

But the best-known and most striking hymn on the subject is the Purusha Sūkta, which describes the sacrifice of Purusha by the gods, who make heaven and earth from his body. It is a most remarkable hymn for many reasons. Purusha is at once a divine being, the raw material of the world and of all living creatures, and the archetype of human nature; yet the account of existence is not complete, for the world is spoken of not only as being made from the sacrifice, but as existing before it. Purusha is not self-existent, for he grows greater by food. The gods appear suddenly and without explanation. It is not said how they came into being; they merely appear as sacrificers. In fact, though the hymn to some extent gives an account of creation, this is not its main intention. In reality it explains a ritual. The actual Purusha was a victim, it seems a human victim; the gods are the officiating priests; and, as the world is formed from the parts of the original Purusha, so it is to be renewed by the sacrifice of the actual one. Here perhaps we catch sight of the Dravidians, for we can hardly read the hymn without remembering the human sacrifices that took place among the jungle tribes not long ago, and may take place among them still in regions where the law does not reach. We can scarcely see the

place of Brāhman priests in such a ceremony; but it seems as if at any rate they could philosophise about it. The hymn is specially noticeable because it contains the only mention in the Rigveda of Caste, as we know it; the last verse gives the result of the sacrifice, that by it the gods obtained heaven. One detail is wanting: no mention is made of the person to whom, if to anyone, the sacrifice is offered.

The hymn is as follows:

1. Purusha had a thousand heads, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet; he covered the earth on all sides and went ten fingers breadth further.

2. In truth Purusha is all this, what is and what is to be, the lord of immortality, who grows yet greater by food.

3. So far he extends, and yet greater is Purusha, one quarter of him is all creatures, three quarters of him, immortality in heaven.

4. With three quarters Purusha went up, again one quarter of him was here; then he strode over things living and lifeless.

5. Virāj was born from him, Purusha from Virāj; when he was born he went through the earth, westward and eastward.

6. When the gods offered sacrifice with Purusha, spring was the butter, summer the fuel, autumn the oblation;

7. They consecrated him as a sacrifice on the grass, Purusha born in earliest time; the gods, the sādhyas and rishis sacrificed by him.

8. From that sacrifice, offered entire, when the curdled butter was collected, were made cattle, birds, creatures of forest and field.

9. From that sacrifice, offered entire, the Rik and the

Sāma were born; the lights were born from it, the Yajur was born from it.

10. From it horses were born, and creatures with teeth in both jaws; yes, cows were born from it; from it sheep and goats were born.

11. In how many parts did they distribute Purusha? In how many parts arrange him? What do they call his mouth, what his arms, what his thighs and feet?

12. The Brāhman was his mouth; his arms made the Rājanyas; his thighs were the Vaiçyas; from his feet the Çūdras were born.

13. The moon was born of his mind; from his eyes the sun was born; from his mouth Indra and Agni; and from his breath the wind was born.

14. From his navel was the sky; from his head heaven came; from his feet earth; the regions from his ear. Thus the worlds were set in order.

15. Seven were his fencing-sticks, three times seven fagots were laid, when the gods sacrificed Purusha as a victim.

16. By sacrifice the gods sacrificed the sacrifice. These were the first rites. Those wise ones reached heaven, where of old the sādhyas were gods. x. 90.

The priestly cycle of thought is complete: we see a life poured out for the life of the world, not offered to anyone, but itself the source of life. In Soma and Purusha it has no moral character whatever; in the Horse it has just enough to awake pity; but in no case does it make any demand on the worshipper. He only takes the benefits that follow the sacrifice, but has no idea of following the example of the victim. So poet and priest have come to the same conclusion by different paths; and the divine nature as the sacrifice is again the vital principle.

THE DIVINE NATURE AS AN ABSTRACTION

We have still to hear the philosopher. There were men who could be satisfied with none of the earlier ideas, and yet who had no thought of breaking with the old ways. We are now to see the attempts they made to meet scepticism, and to reach a more satisfying idea of the divine nature for themselves. Of scepticism there are various traces in the hymns. We have assertions about Indra's existence and supremacy[1] which show that these were questioned; there are references to unbelievers, who say: Indra is not[2]; we have also a frankly comic description of the Brāhmans, chattering round the Soma-vats, like frogs in the rains[3], for a Brāhman generally has the merit of being ready to enjoy, or to perpetrate, a joke at his own expense.

But if some denied, more were concerned to assert, and of these some tried to find the divine nature in an abstraction. A group of gods appear who are still presented under more or less human form; but they represent, not the powers of physical nature, but the powers of the intellect, not storm or sun, but the power that makes, the power that begets, speech, the power of prayer. They have artificial names, evidently the result of reflection; and, even when they take over the myths belonging

[1] x. 86, 1. [2] viii. 100, 3. [3] vii. 103.

to other gods, they remain dignified but unconvincing figures, more to be studied than worshipped. The greatest of them are Bṛihaspati, the 'Lord of Prayer,' who takes the place of Indra as the slayer of the drought demon, Vṛitra; Viçvakarman, 'the maker of the world'; Vāk, the goddess of 'Speech'; Prajāpati, 'lord of living creatures'; Ka, 'Who,' a god who owes his existence to the hymn which asks, 'To what god must we offer sacrifice?' Who? asks the hymn, and the Brāhmans answer: Who. Of these gods Bṛihaspati is a sort of sublimated Brāhman, in the name of Vāk we see a shadow of the doctrine of the divine word, the Logos; Prajāpati represents again the vital impulse, consciously realised; Ka may stand for the ceaseless question in the Indian mind, which goes on for ever asking, and never arrives at action, waiting till the day for all doubts to be taken away before it will adventure itself.

THE DIVINE NATURE AS THE ONE BEHIND THE MANY

But a philosopher is never content to believe in many gods; and these thinkers saw, and declared, that it was one power which lay behind the many names that men had given. i. 164, is one of the most interesting hymns in the Veda; it consists for the most part of a series of riddles about numbers,

and metaphorical descriptions of the year and the sun; suddenly the poet breaks out:

I do not know what kind of thing I am, mysterious, bound, my mind wanders;

and then goes on to the famous saying:

Indra, Varuṇa, Agni, they say, yes divine Garutmat with heavenly wings;

Inspired men speak in many ways of what is one, they say Agni, Yama, Mātariçvan. i. 164, 37, 46.

Elsewhere we see the same idea in connection with Indra; there is only one power, it is only illusion that makes us think we see many, or that they can ever clash:

Indra takes many shapes quickly by his illusions. vi. 47, 18.

Illusion in truth were all thy battles, they say, thou hast known no enemies, either now or formerly. x. 54, 2.

Another hymn consists of three verses; the first and the last deal with the ritual of the sacrifice and the wealth that is to result from it, but the middle verse connects it with the thought of the underlying unity of existence:

There is one fire only, wherever it is kindled; one sun shines through the world; one dawn lightens all this; truly one has become all this. viii. 58, 2.

THE DIVINE NATURE AS THE ULTIMATE SOURCE OF BEING

But what is this One? The answer to this, the great question at the end of all questions, is given us only in the tenth book of the hymns, where we find the flower of Vedic thought. Having rejected the thought that the divine power is moral, which would lead to its recognition as a person, India has passed through every half-way house, and is about to develop the opposite theory, that the divine is something of which we can have no direct knowledge. Its working we know, but in itself it is dark to us; and before we can know it we must put away all that makes life for us. We can imagine a personality which is a reflection of ours, or we can form some sort of notion of a personality of which ours is a reflection; but if anything is not a person at all, but a thing, or a force, we can only know, or try to know, it from the outside. We cannot understand it, or begin to understand it, though we may know about it, from the way in which it affects us or other persons whom we do know.

According to Indian reasoning the divine power cannot be a person, for that implies limitation. A person is so by reason of the power of choice, the will, which chooses one thing and rejects another. We are persons by virtue of this faculty, in so far

as we possess it; but the divine nature must be beyond making distinctions, all things must be alike to it, for it is the source of them all. It cannot be a mere natural force—that is obvious to any educated man: the system of priest and sacrifice must itself be explained before it can explain. It holds society together, and satisfies simple people; but we grow beyond it, and the wise man will at last abandon it: he will leave off the study of the Vedas and will offer no more sacrifice. As for the abstractions, they are nothing real, only phrases, used for picturesqueness sake, to clothe bare speculation and keep up the link with the ignorant. What then is the real truth?

Four hymns give us the answer. The first, x. 72, is a very difficult one. It gives three answers, one after the other. First we are told that Brahmaṇaspati made the world, welding it like a smith; or else the gods made it, by dancing, as the hot dust rose under their feet; or again, existence sprang from non-existence: there was a productive power in existence, and the world came from that. It seems a bald statement; but it is as far as we shall ever get on these premises. The poet feels its baldness so much that he falls back on the dancing gods; and yet it is a stumbling attempt at finding words from the unimaginable.

In another hymn, x. 82, the poet begins by

saying that Viçvakarman made the world. He compares the work to that of a builder or carpenter; and he then tries to imagine what there was before. He thinks there was a primeval germ, containing all the gods, and:

> That one, in which were all creatures, rested on the navel of the unborn;
> You will not find him who brought forth these, there is another among you.
> Covered with mist and muttering, chanters of hymns wander, entangled in this life. x. 82, 6, 7.

Alas, poor chanter of hymns! Like all Indians he is confused by his own metaphors; the unborn has a human shape; he cannot find words to express what the unborn is, except such as obscure him at the same time; he knows his own failure, and ends unsatisfied, with a singularly apt cry.

Yet another hymn, x. 190, attributes all things to *tapas*, which means heat in the outward world, and also devotional zeal and austerity. From that glow come law and truth, as we might say order; and from this principle come material things. We find this teaching more fully expressed in the last hymn of the four, x. 129, the greatest hymn of the whole Veda, and the completion of all its teaching. Nor is it the end of Vedic teaching in the Rigveda only; for as long as we follow this way we shall never get beyond it. This hymn sums up

the whole thought of India, so far as philosophers can carry it. Before they had well begun the search after truth they came to the end, and realised that we cannot have absolute knowledge; and indeed, we never do know anything except by faith, which is one form of love; love waiting is hope, love seeking is faith, love acting is morality; and as a matter of daily experience we find that our most certain knowledge, in the end all our knowledge, comes through our affections. But all early thought, and especially Indian thought, is repelled by the corruption of the affections, and seeks knowledge by way of intellectual effort only, deliberately setting aside anything akin to emotion. In this hymn we see the endeavour to form an idea of a state in which nothing exists, the state before the beginning; before matter and before desire we see formless water and darkness; then there is a further attempt made to imagine what came before that, and this is abandoned as soon as formulated. The poet was too great a thinker, and too honest a man, to suppose that he had done what he had not done. The Hebrew, looking at the same problem, asserts that he knows a person; if he does, the origin of matter is not explained, but life becomes possible. The Indian must have everything explained before he can live, and is in the position of the centipede, who died of starvation, because he could not understand

how he moved all his legs, and therefore failed to move any. The Hebrew can, and indeed must, live, and lets explanations, for which he does not care as they deserve, wait. We get no explanation either way, but one way we get life.

The hymn is as follows:

1. There was neither nothing nor manifest being, neither air nor space beyond. What covered? Where? For whose pleasure? Was water the deep abyss?

2. There was no death, therefore no immortality; there was no knowledge of day and night; that one breathed without breath, by its own nature; beside it there was nothing, other or beyond.

3. In the beginning there was darkness, hidden in darkness; all this was waters, unknown. That one, void wrapped in emptiness, was brought forth by the power of brooding heat.

4. That in the beginning became desire, that which first was the seed of mind; seers, searching by thought, found in the heart the link between being, unmanifest and manifest.

5. Was their ray, as it stretched across, below? Was it above? There was life, there was power, matter below, will above.

6. Who knows truly, who here declares, whence it came, whence this universe? The gods were later than it, the lords of creation, who knows whence it was?

7. Whence this creation was, whether he made it or not, he who overlooks it in highest heaven, surely he knows, or he does not know.

CHAPTER II

THE DIVINE NATURE IN THE UPANISHADS

In the Upanishads we find a doctrine not only of the divine, but also of human nature. In the Vedas there is not much said about this; human nature was taken as something simple, familiar and obvious. It is the change on this point that marks the difference between the ages of the Vedas and the Upanishads.

Each Veda was followed by its own Brāhmaṇa. These were long books, giving minute directions for the right performance of ritual, in ceremonies which were intended to go on for days, sometimes for months, elaborate beyond belief. The Brāhmaṇas end in philosophical treatises, the work of men who wanted to find truth and reason behind the wearisome proceedings to which custom bound them; and these treatises are the Upanishads. The derivation of the word Upanishad is not known; it is generally supposed to be from *upa-ni-sad*, 'to sit down,' because the doctrine would be taught to the

students as they sat round their teacher. Another derivation makes the word mean 'the destroyer,' that by which ignorance is destroyed. The number of Upanishads is generally reckoned as a hundred and eight, but of these only twelve matter in the present connection. These are the most authoritative, and some of them are the oldest; and they were commented on by the great scholar, Çaṃkarāchārya. It is not possible to put any exact date to them; but the oldest are older than Buddhism, for the Buddhist books refer to them, whereas they do not refer to the Buddhists; but they do refer to the Vedas as a completed whole, so that we may say that the oldest Upanishads were composed between the completion of the Vedas and the preaching of Buddha, that is before the sixth century B.C., perhaps about the time of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. The latest of the twelve may not be very much older than the Christian era.

The six oldest are in prose[1], and are called Bṛihadāraṇyaka, Chhāndogya, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Kaushītaki, and Kena (or Talavakāra). Bṛihadāraṇyaka and Chhāndogya are the longest of any, and contain a great many passages of the first importance. In Bṛihadāraṇyaka is the teaching of the rishi Yājña-valkya, in whom we may recognise a real man, and at times a distinctly humorous one, through the

[1] The order followed in this arrangement is Deussen's.

remote and tangled controversies which he carries on. His teaching is summed up in the formula '*Neti*, *Neti*,' 'No, no,' the denial of qualities or attributes in the ultimate self. Chhāndogya contains the teaching given to Çvetaketu by his father Uddālaka, when he returned from his schooling 'conceited, considering himself well-read and stern.' This teaching is summed up in the other great formula of Indian philosophy, 'tat tvam asi,' 'thou art that.' Taittirīya finds the ultimate Self in food; Aitareya contains a great amount of magic, and a specially important account of creation; Kaushītaki gives us the doctrine of the supreme as *prāṇa*, 'breath'; Kena, in some ways the most attractive of the Upanishads, is remarkable for its sense of wonder at the mystery of existence.

The next four are in verse, their names are Kaṭha, Īçā, Çvetāçvatara, Muṇḍaka. Īçā is the shortest of all, only eighteen verses, but of great interest. It contains a long definition of the true Self, and ends with invocations to the old Vedic gods. Kaṭha gives us the story of Nachiketas, who visited Death in his house, and learnt from him what comes after this life. Çvetāçvatara throws light on a time when, it seems, there was a revival of the old religion, and the philosophers took up the names of the old gods, and the old ceremonies, and put a new life into them. Muṇḍaka is unusually clear and well-arranged; it

has two chapters on the nature of the Self, and one on man's relation to it.

The two last Upanishads are in prose, Praçna and Maitrāyaṇa. They consist largely of recapitulations from the older books, combined anew for the use of later times.

Before we attempt to look at the Upanishads in detail we must realise what the object was with which they were written. They were not meant to make things easy or clear, or to set forth any system of doctrine as public property; they are addressed to a special class of highly trained men, who have learnt all that common life can teach and not found it enough; and are meant to show them a better truth that had been hidden under the popular teaching. And this truth is given in technical terms, parables, and mysteries,

> For the gods love what is mysterious, and dislike what is obvious. Bṛih. 4, 2, 2.[1]

They are obscure for another reason, because they are based on contradictory theories; and the reconciliation between these theories is only apparent, a point which will have to be made clear as we go on; while the account of the physical facts with which the reasoning is enforced is so wild that we can attach no literal meaning to it, yet so vital to the

[1] The quotations throughout are from the translation in the *Sacred Books of the East*.

argument that it cannot be left out. When we are told that:

> There are one hundred and one arteries of the heart, one of them penetrates the crown of the head: moving upwards by it a man reaches the immortal; the others serve for departing in different directions. Chh. 8, 6, 5.

Such a statement does not help us at all, especially when it is also said that these arteries are brown, white, blue, yellow and red, and when in another place[1] we are told that there are seventy-two thousand of them. One might go on for ever quoting examples; but what concerns us is not so much the thing that is said, as the temper of mind in which it is said; and though at moments we may be inclined to cry out that this sort of thing has no value, yet as it had one in the minds of its authors, we must make an attempt to enter into their meaning, if we wish to understand what they did in the world.

The authors of the Upanishads were looking at the world in the light of a new faculty: they had begun to reflect on themselves, not only on the things outside themselves. At first, man's attention was all directed to the outside; men thought about business and pleasure, sun, wind and rain; and these things supplied their idea of the divine nature. God, like everything else, was a power outside them; and

[1] Bṛih. 2, 1, 19.

it had not occurred to them that there was a world within. So Death taught Nachiketas:

> Death said: The Self-existent pierced the openings (of the senses) so that they turn forward: therefore man looks forward, not backward into himself. Some wise man, however, with his eyes closed and wishing for immortality, saw the Self behind. Kaṭha 2, 4, 1.

The Indian mind realises with startling distinctness that what we see with our eyes is not absolutely true; and then, instead of following the apparent or partial truth in the hope that it may lead to a fuller one, turns away from it altogether, troubles no more about physical fact, and looks inward only, trying to see immortality and the Self.

The Indians of the Vedic times, both Aryan and Dravidian, had left to their sons a tradition of gods, legends, myths, spells and magic rites; and these the sons had no intention of losing. Hinduism never rejects anything that it can possibly absorb, and it rejected nothing of its traditional lore; but it took a new attitude towards it. Instead of merely repeating, it reflected, and tried to interpret. In the Upanishads therefore, we shall find no destructive criticism, and no reforming zeal, but a new sense of wonder, and a new method of interpretation.

Another characteristic of Indian thought that we must notice is that the teaching of the Upanishads is addressed to individuals, and treats of individuals,

not of the community. In India salvation is thought of only from the individual point of view:

When all desires that dwell in his heart cease, then the mortal becomes immortal, and obtains Brahma.

When all the ties of the heart are severed here on earth, then the mortal becomes immortal, here ends the teaching. Kaṭha 2, 6, 14, 15.

It is each man by himself that is the centre of interest; it is his relation to the world and to reality that we are to study; his relation to the community is only a means to an end. If he shows kindness and compassion it is because such a temper is the most wholesome for one in search of liberation; and he shows them, not to any body of men, but to other individual men. Towards a community as such, a nation, a city, a tribe or a brotherhood of any sort, he has no relation. Even his caste is only a natural distinction, involving no responsibility and no loyalty; even his family is to be cast off at last. We shall consider this point of view again when we come to think about the view taken of human nature; now we notice it in passing.

THE DIVINE NATURE AS VITAL PRINCIPLE

In the last chapter we saw that the teaching of the Vedas gathered itself into three groups, representing tendencies which we shall now follow into the later teaching.

We think first of the divine nature as Vital Principle. The Divine in this conception has lost any moral character which it may once have had, and has kept only that of energy. Hiraṇyagarbha, in x. 121, works, but makes no comment or moral judgment on his work; he gives no commands, and has no intercourse with it. Attention centres on the world without; and even when we come to the Upanishads, we find that the world of thought and emotion is a kind of afterthought, fitted into the explanation that has been put forth with a view to the world of earth and sky. The creating force is described under terms that suggest a person; but his power of choice is limited to the one primal choice of whether he will create at all or not. After that he works by experiment, dealing with some force of which he is not wholly master. As he does so, the names of the old gods reappear, but they are now only the senses, the various powers of the body. Agni has become speech, Vāyu, the wind, is breath, Āditya, the sun, is sight, and so on.

To show the working of this principle we will take one of the numerous myths about the beginning of things. It is given us in Aitareya 2, 4, 1.

Verily in the beginning all this was Self, one only; there was nothing else living whatsoever.

He thought: Shall I send forth worlds? He sent forth these worlds.

Having formed the worlds, that is the water above the heaven, the heaven, the earth, and the water under the earth:

> He thought: there are these worlds; shall I send forth guardians of the worlds?

He then formed Purusha, the 'Male,' brooding over him, so that one by one his different members burst forth. This Purusha is, as in Rigveda x. 90, a sort of archetypal man, not an actual man, nor yet divine, but described under human terms, and summing up in himself all forms of existence. From each of Purusha's members as they appeared, came a power and a deity; the power of speech and the deity of fire from the mouth; sight and the sun from the eyes; hearing and the four regions of space from the ears; hairs and plants from the skin; mind and the moon from the heart; down-breathing (the wind of the stomach) and death from the navel; seed and water from the generative organ. These deities were tormented by hunger and thirst, so the Self made cows and horses for them; but these were not enough, so the Self made man, and the deities said: Well done! each deity entered the part of man appropriate to him, and was satisfied, while hunger and thirst entered as partners with them. The Self then made food for the worlds, by brooding over the water, from which matter or form was then born,

not apparently having come into existence before. Finally:

> He thought: How can all this be without me?

and at last:

> Opening the suture of the skull, he got in by that door. Ait. 2, 4, 3, 7.

What does all this strange account stand for? Is there any attempt in it after historical truth? We may smile at the bare suggestion, and yet the absence of such an attempt is worth noticing. There are attractive suggestions of something further—the correspondence between man and nature, the short-coming of the animals, the Self entering into what he has made; but the system has no foundation in natural fact, even in fact wrongly observed, and the suggestion remains a suggestion, leading to nothing more. No motive is given for creation. The Self merely thinks: Shall I send forth? and does send forth. The motive appears later, when the worlds, having come into existence, begin to want guardians, and the guardians to feel hunger and thirst, and the creatures, made to satisfy the guardians, themselves want food. Need is the motive of all creation after the first act. The chapter on the creation of food[1] tells us a great deal. Matter or form is pro-

[1] Ait. 2, 4, 3.

duced by the Self, brooding over the water which he had sent forth before:

When this food had thus been sent forth, it wished to flee, crying and turning away. He tried to grasp it by speech. He could not grasp it by speech. If he had grasped it by speech, man would be satisfied by naming food.

He then tried to grasp it by one power or function after another, the different senses, the mind, the generative organ, and down-breathing, by means of which he at last got it; and therefore man cannot be satisfied by seeing, hearing, or thinking about food, but has to swallow it. India raises difficulties for the pleasure of getting over them. To the western man, who has never thought of trying to absorb his dinner by looking at it, this seems a most unnecessary speculation; and the objections of the unfortunate food to being consumed add to the difficulty. Is the food then one person, and the Self another? Did the Self make the food with a will of its own? Or what is the idea with which the rishi appears to be struggling? Perhaps we shall find some sort of answer in the Self's self-communing after he has got hold of the food:

He thought: How can all this be without me?

And then he thought: By what way shall I get there?

And then he thought: If speech names, if scent smells, if the eye sees, if the ear hears, if the skin feels, if the mind thinks, if the off-breathing digests, if the organ sends forth, then what am I?

It is the very question of the Upanishads; the Self cannot distinguish between himself and his faculties; are they himself, or something else? He seems to have abandoned his meditations, for in the next verse:

Opening the suture of the skull, he got in by that door,

entering as we all must on practical life.

When born he looked through all things, in order to see whether anything wished to proclaim here another. He saw this person only as the widely-spread Brahma. 'I saw it,' thus he said. Therefore he was Idam-dra ('seeing this').

Being Idam-dra by name, they call him Indra mysteriously. For the Devas love mystery, yea, they love mystery. Ait. 2, 4, 3, 11.

In another myth we find the sense of need as the motive of creation. The Self in his solitary existence felt fear; then, having argued himself out of fear (As there is nothing but myself, why should I fear?), he felt loneliness, and created for the sake of company[1]. In another account the world was created by hunger itself, to supply its own need[2], or by death which is hunger. This story is strangely interrupted for a moment to explain why we have no hair in our mouths.

The next line of thought which we shall follow is that which tries to unify all things by deriving them all, both material and immaterial, from one

[1] Bṛih. 1, 4, 1. [2] Bṛih. 1, 2, 1.

material element. This element comes from the Self, and is the only thing which does so come. The original element is sometimes water, or fire, or ether. We read how:

In the beginning there was nothing here whatsoever. By Death indeed all this was concealed, by hunger; for death is hunger. Death thought: Let me have a body. Then he moved about, worshipping. From him thus worshipping water was produced. Bṛih. 1, 2, 1[1].

or else:

In the beginning, my dear, there was that only which is, one only without a second, ...It thought: May I be many, may I grow forth. It sent forth fire. Chhānd. 6, 2, 3.

or else:

From that Self sprang ether; from ether, air; from air, fire; from fire, water; from water, earth; from earth, herbs; from herbs, food; from food, seed; from seed, man. Taitt. 2, 1[2].

The value of these theories lies in their recognition of the world as a unity. We get beyond the many gods, each with his own kingdom, and see the same power working in the tree and in the lightning that strikes it. This single element is sometimes one of the functions of the body. It is the person in the eye. The little figure of ourselves which we see reflected in our neighbour's eye has always attracted the attention of primitive people as being possibly

[1] See also Brih. 5, 5, 1. Ait. 2, 4, 3, 1. Kaushī. 1, 7.
[2] See also Chhānd. 1, 9, 1.

the man's soul. This old idea was carried on, and a new meaning given to it by the new teachers of India:

> The person that is seen in the eye, that is the Self. This is the immortal, the fearless, this is Brahma. Chhānd. 4, 15, 1.

Or again it is in the heart that the 'person' lives:

> He is my self within the heart, smaller than a corn of rice, smaller than a corn of barley, smaller than a mustard seed, smaller than a millet[1] seed or the kernel of a millet seed. He also is my self within the heart, greater than the earth, greater than the sky, greater than heaven, greater than all these worlds. Chhānd. 3, 14, 3.

This passage is one of the gems of the Upanishads, where poetry illuminates a true experience.

Another form under which the vital principle is found is the breath, Prāṇa. At all times we think of the breath as very nearly the same thing as the life; here they are quite the same. Kaushītaki gives the fullest account of this teaching:

> Indra said: I am prāṇa, meditate on me as the conscious self, as life, as immortality. As long as prāṇa dwells in this body, so long, surely, there is life....He who meditates on me as life and immortality, gains his full life in this world, and obtains in the Svarga-world immortality and indestructibility. Kaushī. 3, 2.

We cannot help wondering what has come over our old friend Indra, whose merry days by the Soma-

[1] S. B. E. translates 'canary seed.'

vats seem here to have become strangely remote. His present notion, however, is plain enough, that breath is life, which is obvious, and therefore must be worshipped, or thoughtfully contemplated, so that it may in the end be appropriated.

We have the same idea given us four times over in different Upanishads in the form of a story, the contest of the senses[1]. The liveliest version is in Bṛihadāraṇyaka:

These senses, when quarrelling together as to who was the best, went to Brahma, and said: Who is the richest of us? He replied: He by whose departure this body seems worst, he is the richest.

The tongue departed, and having been absent for a year, it came back and said: How have you been able to live without me? They replied: Like unto people not speaking with the tongue, but breathing with the breath, seeing with the eye, hearing with the ear, knowing with the mind, generating with seed. Thus have we lived. Then speech entered in....

Each sense departed in turn, and the rest lived an incomplete life without it, but when it came to the turn of the breath:

The breath, when on the point of departing, tore up these senses, as a great excellent horse of the Sindhu country might tear up the pegs to which he is tethered. They said to him: Sir, do not depart, we shall not be able to live without thee. He said: Then make me an offering. They said: Be it so.

[1] Bṛih. 6, 1, 7. Chhānd. 5, 1, 1. Ait. 2, 1, 4, 9. Praçna 2, 1.

We can scarcely suppose that we are not meant to be amused at the dilemma of the quarrelsome senses, their six years' discomfort, and the final catastrophe when they find themselves on the point of being suffocated. This is a sample of the playfulness that meets us continually in the Upanishads, and indeed in all Indian writings. It is not the attitude of men engaged in a search the end of which is life or death to them; a seeker after truth may be playful, and generally is so, over side issues; he may be humorous with a somewhat bitter humour over the main issue, and the wonderful perversity of things. But this vein of gentle mockery at the heart of religious speculation is a peculiarly Indian characteristic.

The imagery with which we have been dealing is very suggestive, so long as we take it as imagery. We all know the world within; St Augustine went there, and described its 'fields and spacious palaces ...a large and boundless chamber[1]!' When we want to see our friend's very self, or to show him ours, we look straight into his eyes. The connection of life with blood or breath needs no emphasis; but, for all that, Western races know that connection is not identity. These things may be images, or metaphors, or again they may be sacraments, an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual reality; but there is one side of their being on which

[1] *Confessions* x.

eye and heart, blood and breath are physical organs, living tissue or passing air, wonderful beyond our understanding, but not personal. There is no space arranged in the heart or eye where any little man lives. Air in the lungs cannot possibly talk and have a will of its own. We have no idea what matter is, either living or inanimate; but we do know that however we may come in contact with it, yet we ourselves are not it. We can neither define nor ignore the distinction between ourselves and it. Popular Western thought has been too ready to suppose that it could understand this difference, and to say that of course matter was just stuff that you can perceive with your senses, and deal with by means of your hands or other organs, while spirit is a sort of a something, like a transparent body, shut up inside the material body, or perhaps floating about on its own account after death. Yet one thing even the most popular Western thought has acknowledged, through all confusion and short-coming, that the spirit is something which is good or bad, and that what makes it either is its power of choice or will. If it cannot choose between good and evil it is not a spirit but a force, and will probably turn out to be a product of material things. To reach this conclusion it is necessary to take a leap from the things that can be proved, and to put faith in something that can never be proved in human

language, because language is built up out of metaphors taken from material things, and in the last resort has to go back to the things from which it was taken. We can never get away from the fact that spirit means air, except by a leap of our minds to the realisation that, whatever we call it, there is something which is spirit and is not air.

We find the Indian sages struggling with the problem in a chapter on the material and the immaterial[1]. They try to express the distinction by similes; and the similes catch them back again: at the end they are left struggling in the toils of their own words. The chapter is a short one, only six verses, but it shows us the fate of a man trying to jump off his own shadow.

There are two forms of Brahma, the material and the immaterial, it tells us; and then comes the attempt to distinguish which things belong to which order in the outer world 'with regard to the Devas,' the gods:

> Everything except air and sky is material, is mortal, is solid, is definite. The essence of that which is material... is the sun that shines.
>
> But air and sky are immaterial, are immortal, are fluid, are indefinite. The essence of that which is immaterial... is the person in the disk of the sun[2]....

[1] Bṛih. 2, 3.

[2] That is the heavenly being who corresponds to the person in the eye.

Now with regard to the body. Everything except the breath and the ether within the body is material, is mortal, is solid, is definite. The essence of that which is material ...is the eye....

But breath and the ether within the body are immaterial, are fluid, are indefinite. The essence of that which is immaterial...is the person in the right eye.

And what is the appearance of that person? Like a saffron-coloured raiment, like white wool, like cochineal, like the flame of fire, like the white lotus, like sudden lightning. He who knows this, his glory is like unto sudden lightning. Bṛih. 2, 3, 1 to 6.

A bright colour, an intense light, such is the image through which the Self is interpreted; but there is no word of justice or wisdom, and 'immaterial' is one with 'fluid' or 'indefinite.'

To understand how consistently the idea of the divine power as vital principle is carried out in the Upanishads, we must consider the place given in their teaching to food. We touch our bodies, and are aware of a heat within them, which we are to recognise as one with the life of the world:

That light which shines above this heaven, higher than all,...that is the same light which is within man.

Or we may discover its presence by stopping our ears, and listening

to what is like the rolling of a carriage, or the bellowing of an ox, or the sound of a burning fire. Chhānd. 3, 13, 7 and 8.

By these primitive methods we may detect the

Vaiçvānara Self, which is the actual fire of digestion, the name meaning 'common to all.' This power is described in several places as what is to be worshipped. We have a full account of it in the story of the five great householders[1]. There were once five great householders and theologians who came together to consider what is our true self and what is Brahma, and they invited a friend to join them, Uddālaka, a great sage, whom we hear of elsewhere in Chhāndogya, and who was then engaged in studying the Vaiçvānara Self; Uddālaka was afraid they might ask him more than he knew, and suggested that they should all go together to King Açvapati, 'the lord of horses,' who also knew the Vaiçvānara Self, and ask him. He received them kindly, and began his instructions. He asked each of them in turn:

Whom do you meditate on as the Self?

The first answered: 'Heaven only, venerable King'; the second, 'the sun only'; the third, air; the fourth, ether; the fifth, water; and Uddālaka, the earth. To each of these answers the King replies that it is part of the truth, and that in consequence blessing and prosperity follow those who believe so:

You eat food and see your desire, and whoever thus meditates on that Vaiçvānara Self eats food and sees his desire, and has Vedic glory in his house.

[1] Chhānd. 5, 11 to 24.

To each believer comes an appropriate blessing; but because the truth is only partial, the very blessing it brings is in danger of being lost. The King says to the man who worships heaven:

> The Self which you meditate on is the Vaiçvānara Self, called Sutejas, having good light. Therefore every kind of Soma libation is seen in your house...that however is but the head of the Self, and thus your head would have fallen, if you had not come to me.

In the same way the sun is the eye of the Self, the air is its breath, ether is the trunk, water is the bladder, earth the feet; but in each case:

> If you had not come to me, you would have become blind...your breath would have left you...your trunk would have perished...your bladder would have burst... your feet would have given way.

The King then proceeds to give to the wise men a complete description of the Vaiçvānara Self:

> He said to them all: You eat your food, knowing that Vaiçvānara Self as if it were many. But he who worships the Vaiçvānara Self as a span long, and as identical with himself, he eats food in all worlds, in all beings, in all Selfs.

When once we recognise ourselves as one with the One Self, whatever being eats food, in whatever world, we are one with it. Even if our particular body should die of starvation, our real Self is that Self which eats food. Wherever food is eaten, we share, if not in the communion of saints, at least

in the communion of living things. This is the true Agnihotra, the fire-sacrifice:

> He who offers this Agnihotra with a full knowledge of its true purport, he offers it in all worlds, in all beings, in all Selfs....As hungry children here on earth sit round their mother, so do all beings sit round the Agnihotra, yea, round the Agnihotra. Chhānd. 5, 24, 4.

And so the story ends, with the picture of all creatures gathering round the altar of sacrifice to receive nourishment in peace.

This idea, that the divine principle can find its seat in food, startles us at first from its unfamiliarity; and yet if that principle is the vital impulse in living things, and nothing else, it is reasonable enough. At any rate this view gives us a fixed point to work from. If a man's chief duty is to get food, he has at any rate a rule of life, and a definite aim. The point of view is most clearly put forward in Taittirīya. This Upanishad is divided into three chapters, called Vallis, and the third of these is the Valli of the rishi Bhṛigu. We read how Bhṛigu was instructed by his father, Varuṇa, to know Brahma. He is to find out what it is from which beings are born, by which they live, and into which they enter at death. He does penance five times, and each time perceives a new view of Brahma, and recognises five such things, food, breath, mind, understanding and bliss. We go on with the practical application:

He who knows this becomes exalted,...let him never abuse food,...let him never shun food,...let him acquire much food....If he gives food amply, food is given to him amply. If he gives food fairly, food is given to him fairly. If he gives food meanly, food is given to him meanly[1]. Taitt. 3, 10, 1.

The wise man gives freely, that he may receive abundance in return. He recognises Brahma in every function of his own life, and in all the operations of nature, the same in both:

He who is this in man, and he who is that in the sun, both are one. Taitt. 3, 10, 4.

And at last:

When he has departed this world, after reaching and comprehending the Self which consists of food, the Self which consists of breath, the Self which consists of mind, the Self which consists of understanding, the Self which consists of bliss, enters and takes possession of these worlds; and having as much food as he likes, and assuming as many forms as he likes, he sits down singing this Sāman: Hāvu, hāvu, hāvu! I am food, I am food, I am food! I am the eater of food, I am the eater of food, I am the eater of food! I am the poet, I am the poet, I am the poet! I am the first-born of the Right. Before the Devas I was in the centre of all that is immortal. He who gives me away he alone preserves me; him who eats food, I eat as food. I overcome the whole world, I, endowed with golden light. He who knows this (attains all this). This is the Upanishad. Taitt. 3, 10, 5.

A strange song, and couched in unfamiliar language, sung to this day by the Brāhmans as they

[1] Compare Luke vi. 38.

sit round, waiting to be feasted and to reward their host with blessings; the perfect life attained, the soul sitting at ease in the centre of all things, the great wave of vitality, rising unchecked through all existence, freely given and freely taken; life strong and abundant, life without struggle, lived for its own sake. Such is the ideal set before us by thinkers of this school.

THE DIVINE NATURE IN THE SACRIFICE

We have already tried to trace the thought of India on the subject of sacrifice in Vedic times, and have found it to be closely connected with the idea of the Divine as the source of material prosperity. In the Brāhmaṇas it is connected as well with the idea of, not a common nature, but the identity between divine and human; but its purpose is still to secure benefits. Whatever the thought of the average Indian might be about the purpose and meaning of the sacrifice, its place in his life was, as it still is, of the first importance. The public sacrifice brought rain and fertility; and the offerings of ghi three times a day in the household fires, with other forms of private sacrifice, secured the welfare of the family. These ceremonies and others made the framework on which the national religion and philosophy grew. Ordinary life and advanced

thought both took shape from it, the rishis of the Upanishads grew up in the midst of it; and their new faculty of self-consciousness drove them to make their account with it.

For the most part they wished things to go on as they were, having indeed no particular reason for altering them. Reformers in India are seldom destructive; they want to retain as much as possible, and only to reinterpret. This first attitude displays itself in the description of the Mantha rite, and in the story of how the Nachiketas rite was instituted. The object of the Mantha rite is to 'reach greatness[1].' It consists of collecting various sorts of food in a bowl, 'a mash of all kinds of herbs with curds and honey,' and ghi, at particular times and with the recitation of particular formulas, and finally eating it. The proper rules for doing this were handed on from one sage to another, with the comment that:

If a man were to pour it on a dry stick, branches would grow, and leaves spring forth. Bṛih. 6, 3, 7.

The Nachiketas rite[2] was taught by Yama, Death, to Nachiketas, saying:

When thou understandest that fire-sacrifice which leads to heaven, know, O Nachiketas, that it is the attainment of the endless worlds, and their support hidden in darkness.

Yama then told him that fire-sacrifice, the beginning of

[1] See Bṛih. 6, 3, 1, and Chhând. 5, 2, 4. [2] Kaṭha 1, 15.

all the worlds, and what bricks are required for the altar, and how many, and how they are to be placed. And Nachiketas repeated all as it had been told to him. Kaṭha 1, 15.

We find no comment or explanation beyond this. The importance of the rites is simply taken for granted. If you want to attain greatness, or to gain the endless worlds, this is what you must do.

But this attitude was not enough for all; some minds required an explanation, a reason why, for the childish and tedious ceremonies which had to be performed. They not unnaturally wanted to know how these had come into existence. The true history of them was unknown, and if known would have appeared to the wise men of those days most uninteresting and also unedifying. They wanted some mysterious and supernatural injunction, promising rewards for the performance, and threatening penalties for the non-performance, of them; and what they wanted they got; and they found, no doubt, the same satisfaction in their achievement that a student of folklore might find when compelled to dance round an imaginary mulberry-bush, a thing that has to be done 'to amuse the children,' by reflecting on the antiquity and original meaning of the ceremony; with this difference, that the modern student can show some reason for believing in the approximate correctness of his imaginations, while the ancient Brāhman neither had nor wanted any.

These explanations are attempts, not at explaining the sacrifice as a whole, but at putting sense into the details of it. They deal with the matter piece-meal, and throw no light on the divine nature that lies behind, except in so far as it is thought to be the kind of nature that responds to this sort of appeal.

A good example of such myth-making is found in the rules for making and using a swing[1]. They begin with the question of how many planks are to be used for the seat and why:

Some say that there should be one plank, because the wind blows in one way, and it should be like the wind. This is not to be regarded. Some say there should be three planks, because there are these three threefold worlds, and it should be like them. That is not to be regarded.

Let there be two, for the two worlds (the earth and heaven) are seen as if most real, while the ether between the two is the sky. Therefore let there be two planks.

Having thus provided for the two planks of the seat and the crack between them, we deal in the same spirit with the kind of wood to be used, the kind of rope, the height above the ground of the seat, the way in which the priest is to get into the swing and out again:

Let him touch the swing with his chin. The parrot thus mounts a tree, and he is of all birds the one who eats most food. Therefore let him touch it with his chin.

[1] Ait. 1, 2, 3.

> Let him mount the swing with his arms. The hawk swoops thus on birds, and on trees, and he is of all birds the strongest. Therefore let him mount with his arms.

The object of the whole action is to get offspring and cattle, food and fortune; and all these are shadowed in the various details, the offspring by the union between the masculine swing and the feminine seat, the cattle by use of proper ropes, food and fortune as indicated above. In all this there is a steady adherence to the old forms, but with a sense that they require some informing reason to make them live. There is about it a touch of sacramental feeling, a sense that the outward sign requires or implies an inward, though in this case hardly a spiritual, part. Sympathetic magic is universal; the most civilized wedding guests will hurl rice after the departing bride and bridegroom; wine still goes round the table the way of the sun; while the savage man conducts all his business on this principle. When that instinct in human nature which expresses itself in such practices has become moral, it is ready for real sacramental teaching. That point had not been reached in India in the age of the Upanishads; and the magic remains mere magic, for the want of morality. But at its lowest there is in this school of thought some attempt to view the inward and outward as one.

A third order of minds were dissatisfied, and even

oppressed with the whole apparatus of sacrifice, and yet wanted to keep the idea, and looked for a truer expression of it. With them the ritual was to be the shadow not of outward things, offspring or cattle, food or fortune, but of something better; and yet it does not seem to have occurred to them to take it as having a moral meaning. Their thought still rested on physical life, vitality. They acknowledge the old ritual in language, but put the actual practice aside. In one case all religious observances are reduced to one, and that one the control of the breath:

> Therefore let a man perform one observance only, let him breathe up and let him breathe down, that the evil death may not reach him....Then he obtains through it union and oneness with that deity (i.e. breath). Bṛih. 1, 5, 23.

Elsewhere it is life itself, without any observance, that is the true sacrifice:

> This is indeed the highest penance, if a man laid up with sickness suffers pain. He who knows this, conquers the highest world.
>
> This is indeed the highest penance, if they carry a dead person into the forest. He who knows this, conquers the highest world.
>
> This is indeed the highest penance, if they place a dead person on the fire. He who knows this, conquers the highest world. Bṛih. 5, 11, 1.

And similarly:

> Man is sacrifice. His first twenty-four years are the morning libation...the next forty years are the midday

libation...the next forty-eight years are the third libation.... He too who knows this, lives on to a hundred and sixteen years. Chhānd. 3, 16, 1 ff.

At our first introduction to Yājñavalkya we find the same teaching. The story is so characteristic of the man, and so peculiarly Indian in its humour, that it is worth telling in full. Yājñavalkya appeared at a great sacrifice, offered by the king of the Videhas. The king had provided a herd of a thousand cows, with weights of gold tied to their horns, as a reward for the most learned Brāhman. He said:

Ye venerable Brāhmaṇas, he who among you is the wisest, let him drive away these cows.

Yājñavalkya, without a moment's hesitation, said to his attendant scholar:

Drive them away, my dear.

This conduct provoked the other Brāhmaṇas, who at once began a series of arguments with Yājñavalkya, who, however, reduced them one by one to silence. The first to attack him was the king's own hotṛi priest, who said:

Are you indeed the wisest among us, O Yājñavalkya?

Yājñavalkya replied:

I bow before the wisest, but I wish indeed to have those cows.

The priest asks how the sacrificer is freed beyond the reach of death. Yājñavalkya answers that it is

by the work of the four priests, the Hotṛi, Adhvaryu, Udgātṛi and Brāhman priests, and that these four are speech, the eye, the breath, and the mind; or they are fire, the sun, the moon, and the wind. The true priests are not men muttering formulas, but the powers of life or of nature[1]. These thinkers do not try to express the inward by the outward, they belittle the outward act. Indeed we shall see in following the teaching of Yājñavalkya that they belittle outward nature, accepting it as inevitable. They despise it as not true. The priest with them is no longer the mediator who links life and symbol; he is a fraud, to be either disregarded or laughed at.

There is yet another school of rationalist thinkers on the sacrifice, who so far as they are concerned themselves reject it altogether. We find their most decided utterances in Muṇḍaka. The Muṇḍaka Upanishad is unusually clear and consistent, and is devoted to this very subject, the value of sacrifice. It is short, three parts of two chapters each. In the first chapter the question is asked:

Sir, what is that through which, if it is known, everything else becomes known?

The answer is an instruction on the nature of the Self, and the method of coming to the knowledge of it; and we are told that:

Two kinds of knowledge must be known, this is what

[1] Bṛih. 3, 1, 1. See also Chhānd. 1, 10 and 11.

all who know Brahma tell us, the higher and the lower knowledge.

The lower knowledge is gained by the diligent practice of sacrifice:

> Practise them (sacrificial works) diligently, ye lovers of truth; this is your path that leads to the world of good works.

Then, after a description of the advantages of sacrifice, the teacher suddenly throws his argument aside, and says:

> But frail, in truth, are those boats, the sacrifices, the eighteen, in which this lower ceremonial has been told. Fools who praise this as the highest good are subject again and again to old age and death.
>
> Fools, dwelling in darkness, wise is their own conceit, and puffed up with vain knowledge, go round and round, staggering to and fro, like blind men, led by the blind....
>
> Considering sacrifice and good works as the best, these fools know no higher good, and having enjoyed their reward on the height of heaven gained by good works, they enter again this world or a lower one. Muṇḍ. 1, 2, 1 to 10.

We could scarcely have a more complete denunciation of ceremonial religion in itself: it is mere folly and darkness, to be flung away root and branch by the wise and enlightened man; but for all that it is to be both allowed and enforced as a discipline for men who are not yet enlightened, and cannot receive the higher wisdom.

These teachers are rationalists, but they are not Protestants. They make no effort against the doctrine they disbelieve; on the contrary, it is to

be carefully preserved, and no one is to go on, or can go on, to the higher knowledge till he has fulfilled all the requirements of the lower.

The perplexing point in this scheme is that it appears to be thought that a certain doctrine can be a preparation for another to which it is directly opposed. We are all driven by force of circumstances to express truths in very different forms when we are explaining them to a more or less primitive understanding. The account of the battle of Waterloo, or of the making of bread, which will be of use to a child of three, of twelve, or a grown person, to an expert historian or a baker, must differ, but they need not be contradictory; whereas with these teachers those who have the lower knowledge only are fools, and their knowledge is vain; if they stay so they are hopelessly condemned, and have to look forward to a constant renewal of old age and death. Not that they are to be blamed for this. In all the Upanishads there is no touch of moral indignation about anything. The more enlightened offer a way of illumination for the less enlightened; but no one is urged into it; and if people like to follow the lower way, and go on with the long round of birth and death, it is entirely their own affair. A blessing and a curse are set before them, but no injunction to choose the blessing, unless they happen to prefer it.

The idea of the divine nature as present in the sacrifice does not take us very far; indeed our sympathy will probably turn rather to those who deny than to those who find it. But it has this merit, that it is an attempt to provide for the community as a whole. Even the 'fools,' who are left to walk on the lower way, are recognised to some extent, and provision is allowed for their low needs.

THE DIVINE NATURE AS THE ULTIMATE

We have followed the line of thought that finds the Divine in the vital impulse; but the explanation did not cover the whole of life. We might carry Açvapati's teaching a step further, and imagine him saying: The Self which you meditate on is the world as a living whole. That, however, is but the body of the Self; and your bodily life will fail if you cannot find a better teacher than me.

Again we have followed the line of thought which finds the Divine in the sacrifice; but sacrifice without morality ends in magic, strained apology, or rejection. Neither of these lines could satisfy the best minds in India. Man still wants to know the Divine as it is, apart from the use we propose to make of it. The world will not give the wise man what he wants; rather it prevents his finding it.

So, when he is old enough, and has finished all the preparatory stages, and done all that must be done to fulfil the lower righteousness, he will retire to the forest, and give himself altogether to the search. But meanwhile there is one form of leaving the world that is common enough, and open to all, and that is sleep; here is escape; for a few hours every day man is actually free, away from the distracting world by himself; and, seeing that his true self is one with the true Self of all the world, it is from sleep that he will learn most about that. The deeper his sleep, the more complete is his escape. It is better to dream than to wake; and better to sleep without dreams than with. Here we begin to look for the Self not in its manifestations, but in itself, as the ultimate.

We have an account of sleep from the more emotional side in Chhāndogya. It is given us in a very beautiful chapter, where we can hardly miss the note of personal experience. It tells us how we look for our true desires, which are hidden by what is false:

Thus whoever belonging to us has departed this life, him we cannot gain back, so that we should see him with our eyes.

Those who belong to us, whether living or departed, and whatever else there is which we wish for and do not obtain, all that we find there,...that Self abides in the heart....He who knows this goes day by day into heaven. Chhānd. 8, 3, 1 to 3.

The passage recalls again St Augustine's description of the power of memory, in which he speaks with extraordinary eloquence and beauty of that inner world, more wonderful than even the outer world of mountains, seas and stars; like the Self in Aitareya, though with a profound difference, he asks:

> What am I then, O my God?...Where then did I find thee?...Thou wert within and I abroad, and there I searched for thee....Thou wert with me, but I was not with thee. Things held me far from thee, which, unless they were in thee, were not at all. *Conf.* x.

In all his meditations St Augustine speaks to God; and this is what the rishi never does. He, too, is trying to reach the ultimate reality, but he does not call out by the way.

We have a more speculative account of the revelation of the Self through sleep in Yājñavalkya's teaching[1]. King Janaka and Yājñavalkya are talking, and the King asks: What is the light of man? Yājñavalkya answers that it is sun, moon, fire, or sound; and the King asks again: When the sun has set...and the moon has set and the fire has gone out, and the sound hushed, what then is the light of man? Yājñavalkya answers that it is the Self; and the King asks: Who is the Self? Yājñavalkya describes him, first as being in the heart surrounded

[1] Bṛih. 4, 3, 7 ff.

by the senses, next as in sleep beyond this world and making it over again for himself; he creates the outward world again with its happiness, and enjoys it by himself, tasting all experiences, till at last he has had enough, and sinks into the deeper sleep, where he desires no more desires, and dreams no more dreams; and this deep sleep is the highest state of being:

> This, indeed, is his true form, free from desires, free from evil, free from fear.

And now nothing can trouble him any more, for nothing seems any more to be real:

> Then a father is not a father, a mother not a mother, the worlds not worlds, the gods not gods....
>
> An ocean is that one seer without any duality. This is the Brahma-world, O King....This is his highest goal, this is his highest success, this is his highest world, this is his highest bliss. All other creatures live on a small portion of that bliss.

So the soul escapes gradually from its individual existence in the heart, where it lives as one man among others, till it realises itself as the one ocean without any duality; and all other creatures are only those which have not yet realised themselves.

If to be fast asleep is the highest life, it is a perfection from which we fall easily and often; but if it is only the image of that life the Self will have to be explained in clearer language; and the best thought in the Upanishads is spent on the attempt so to state the doctrine, without image or allegory,

and in language that admits of no error. It was the Indians who first of any thinkers entered on the struggle of man with his own intellectual limitations, and first fell in that age-long conflict.

What then is the Ultimate Being? What did it come from? Was it something that existed, or did it not exist? Some said one and some the other:

> In the beginning there was that only which is[1].

So Uddālaka told his son Çvetaketu with vehemence, contradicting those who said:

> In the beginning this was non-existent[2].

It may be a mere question of words whether we call a thing existent or not, while it is latent, not actual; and the argument throws no light. We cannot conceive the state that was before the beginning.

But the Self is sought not only by enquiring into origins, but by exploring ourselves as we are, and trying to find out where it now conceals itself. The first necessity is that it must be beyond any limitations. It cannot be thought of as subject to any affection—not to pain, for that is inconceivable, and therefore not to pleasure; for to be subject to pleasure is to be subject to the possibility of pain in the loss of that pleasure. All this is expressed

[1] Chhānd. 6, 2, 1. [2] Chhānd. 3, 19, 1.

as usual in a story[1]. The Sage, Nārada, has learnt all the knowledge of the Vedas; and, still unsatisfied, he comes to Sanatkumāra to be taught; Sanatkumāra tells him that all the wisdom he has learnt is a mere name; but there is something better than name, speech; and better than speech, mind; and so on, through a list of powers. The list is long and unconvincing. There is no sequence in it; and it seems meant only to show how long the way is, and how each power is incomplete in itself. Speech is better than name, mind than speech, will than mind, consideration than will, reflection than consideration, understanding than reflection, power than understanding, food than power, water than food, fire than water, ether than fire, memory than ether, hope than memory, spirit, the spirit by which men live, than hope; and he who knows this is an *ativādin*, one who knows much. But there is a still higher knowledge, and Nārada has more to learn. He must know the true; to understand the true he must understand his understanding, that is he must perceive and understand his perception, that is he must believe and understand his belief; in order to believe he must attend on a spiritual tutor; and to understand his attention on the tutor, he must perform the sacred duties of a student, which cannot be done unless he obtains

[1] Chhānd. 7, 1 to 24.

bliss. This bliss he must desire to understand. 'Sir,' says poor Nārada, 'I desire to understand it.'

> The infinite is bliss. There is no bliss in anything finite. Infinity only is bliss. This infinity, however, we must desire to understand.
>
> Sir, I desire to understand it.

And here we come to the end of the pilgrimage:

> Where one sees nothing else, hears nothing else, understands nothing else, that is the infinite. Where one sees something else, hears something else, understands something else, that is the finite. The infinite is immortal, the finite is mortal.
>
> Sir, in what does the infinite rest?
>
> In its own greatness, or not even in greatness.

There is no rest in anything that is incomplete in itself, in anything that rests in something else. The infinite must not even be said to rest in its own greatness, lest we should think that greatness is something different from itself, and start off again on our wanderings. The thinker is lost in the maze of his own notions, each as it rises in turn suggesting another, till he reaches the thought of something of which all that can be said is that it is not to lead to something else; and even then he is checked by the fear that he may be misunderstood, and some fresh conception may come in. Thought breaks down in the effort to grasp the incomprehensible. We cannot imagine the infinite, but we can name it. We are left with the sense of baffled wonder:

we have tried to attain the ultimate knowledge, and it is beyond us[1]. It is Yājñavalkya who brings all this teaching to a point, and sets it clearly before us.

Yājñavalkya is still carrying on his conversation with King Janaka. It is a conversation, we are told, which he was reluctant to begin, but the King compelled him by an old promise. When Yājñavalkya had given him the doctrine of the ocean without any duality, he went on to describe what happens to the individual self at death; how he gathers the senses together in the heart, and departs; the way in which he then makes a new shape for himself; and what the Self is that acts so:

And he is that great unborn Self, who consists of knowledge, is surrounded by the prāṇas, the ether within the heart. In it there reposes the ruler of all, the lord of all, the king of all. He does not become greater by good works, or smaller by evil works. He is the lord of all, the king of all things, the protector of all things. He is a bank and a boundary, so that these worlds may not be confounded. Brāhmaṇas seek to know him by the study of the Veda, by sacrifice, by gifts, by penance, by fasting, and he who knows him becomes a *muni*. Wishing for that world only, mendicants leave their homes.

Knowing this, the people of old did not wish for offspring. What shall we do with offspring, they said, we who have this Self, and this world? And they, having risen above the desire for sons, wealth and new worlds, wander about as mendicants. For desire for sons is desire for wealth, and

[1] For a similar passage see Kaṭha 1, 3, 10 and also 2, 6, 7.

desire for wealth is desire for worlds. Both these are indeed desires only. He, the Self, is to be described by No, no! he is incomprehensible, for he cannot be comprehended; he is imperishable, for he cannot perish; he is unattached, for he does not attach himself; unfettered, he does not suffer, he does not fail. Him who knows, these two do not overcome, whether he says that for some reason he has done evil, or for some reason he has done good, he overcomes both, and neither what he has done, nor what he has omitted to do, burns him. Bṛih. 4, 4, 22.

This long definition is especially valuable for the fulness of solution that it offers. It shows us the Self as the vital impulse, living in the heart; and again as the principle of law, 'a bank and a boundary,' by virtue of which all things have and keep the right relation to each other. The image is a homely one, and all the better for that; we may see it illustrated any day in the paddy fields, divided by little banks that hold up the water, and make the soil from a mere marsh into an ordered world. We find here also the personal terms which must illustrate for some men the activity of the Self, lord, king, and protector, and the practical means by which only the knowledge of Self can be approached,—that 'lower way,' by which, as we were told in Muṇḍaka, all must go,—study, sacrifice, gifts, penance, fasting, and renunciation. The last is the chief. All ties are a hindrance, the desire for sons is only a desire for wealth; for the muni must be saved alone, he does not save his son as well. And

then Yājñavalkya goes on to speak of the Self as he is in himself. He stands beyond all distinction, pain and pleasure, good and evil. To any suggested definition we can only answer No, no.

This phrase, '*Neti*, *neti*,' is found only in Yājñavalkya's teaching, in the Upanishads; but it is one of their most characteristic phrases[1]. It appears as the summing up of the teaching that he gives to his wife Maitreyī, when he was leaving her for the forest. Before he goes away Yājñavalkya proposes to divide his money between his two wives; but Maitreyī, who 'was conversant with Brahma,' asks him instead to tell her how she may become immortal. He answers that nothing is dear except for the sake of the Self:

> Verily, a husband,...wife,...sons,...wealth,...everything is not dear that you may love everything; but that you may love the Self, therefore everything is dear....
>
> That Self (our individual self), is altogether a mass of knowledge,...when he has departed there is no more knowledge, I say, O Maitreyī. Thus spoke Yājñavalkya.

Maitreyī takes this to mean that the individual self does not survive death, which is not the answer she expected:

> Then Maitreyī said: Here, Sir, thou hast landed me in utter bewilderment, indeed I do not understand him.

[1] We have it four times in Yājñavalkya's own teaching, and once it is quoted. See 3, 9, 26. 4, 2, 4. 4, 4, 22 (as above). 4, 5, 15 (as below), and 2, 3, 6.

But he replied: O Maitreyī, I say nothing that is bewildering. Verily, beloved, that Self is imperishable, and of an indestructible nature.

For when there is as it were duality, then one sees the other, one smells the other, one tastes the other, one salutes the other, one hears the other, one perceives the other, one touches the other, one knows the other; but when the Self only is all this, how should he see another, how should he smell another, how should he taste another, how should he touch another, how should he know another? How should he know him by whom he knows all this? That Self is to be described by No, no! He is incomprehensible, for he cannot be comprehended; he is imperishable, for he cannot perish; he is unattached, for he does not attach himself; unfettered, he does not suffer, he does not fail. How, O beloved, should he know the knower? Thus, O Maitreyī, thou hast been instructed. Thus far goes immortality. Having said so, Yājñavalkya went away into the forest. Bṛih. 4, 5, 14, 15.

What did Maitreyī think as she watched him go? He had brought her to the same conclusion that Nārada and Janaka had reached: where all is one there can be no relation between that One and anything else, for there is nothing else. Maitreyī was afraid that she herself would be lost in that ocean without any duality; and Yājñavalkya answered that this could not be so when she came to see that she herself was that ocean; she was imperishable, and unfettered; she was also unattached, perfect and solitary; she could never see or know another, for there was no other. We think of Maitreyī, left sitting among her household possessions, rather

sadly, looking towards the forest, from which the old man, who is really only herself, will never come back. His arguments seem to be unassailable, but do they really give the answer to the whole of what was in her mind? Can there be more than one real being, and if not how can it have relations? How could it stand apart from itself, and see or know anything? How would it be possible for it to mind whether Yājñavalkya, who was itself, slept at home with Maitreyī, who was also itself, or in the forest, which was also, after a fashion, itself? How could there be any caring, still less any anxiety, when all existence is one, and 'thou art that'? No; these things are, they must be, just the illusions which somehow or other play on the surface of that ocean, and please or distress us as long as we think we are anything else but the One Being. And yet have not the colours on the surface of the ocean a sort of reality? They vanish as soon as we take up the water; but there they are again, as soon as we look for them. Why should the One Being have illusions about itself, especially painful ones? The chances are that Maitreyī obeyed the call of habit, and went to see about her supper, and tried not to listen for such manifestations of the One Real Being as thunderstorms or tigers, and so went on, with a divided mind, unsatisfied.

Meanwhile Yājñavalkya has attained. He does

not mind if he does meet a tiger. He is contented with what he can find to eat, or what some passer-by gives him. He is not troubled even about Maitreyī. Why should he be sorry because for a little she thinks she is sorry? Sorrow and joy are nothing real; once we are free from desire nothing can touch us. Yājñavalkya may speak so for himself, and probably will speak so. He has trained himself for many years to know that the King's court, the argumentative Brāhmans, the cows with gold upon their horns, and the wife who was dear to him, could all alike disappear as an illusion, and leave him alone with his Self. He can be at one in his mind, and at peace; and it must remain to be seen if what satisfies one man can satisfy a whole race of men, if Yājñavalkya can speak not only for himself, but for India, or for the world.

There is still one member of the family, of whose views we have only the slightest indication in the Upanishad, and concerning whom we may therefore allow our fancy a little law:

> Yājñavalkya had two wives, Maitreyī and Kātyāyanī; of these Maitreyī was conversant with Brahma, but Kātyāyanī possessed such knowledge as only women possess. Bṛih. 4, 5, 1.

Kātyāyanī very likely beat her head upon the floor, and cried herself ill, and spoke bitterly to her co-wife into the bargain on the occasion of her husband's

departure. She probably also called on Rāma to witness her distress, and had no hesitation about addressing him as a powerful person, distinct from herself, and who could help her if he would. She neither doubted nor speculated about his nature or her own; and her feelings were uncontrolled by reason. Yājñavalkya's reason was independent of feeling, for he had deliberately put that on one side; and Maitreyī hesitated between the two, silenced, and almost convinced.

CHAPTER III

HUMAN NATURE IN THE UPANISHADS

Our knowledge of everything outside ourselves depends, in the last resort, on our knowledge of ourselves. Therefore in forming an idea of the Great Self we should expect to begin by asking, What is man? or What am I? As a matter of fact this question is invariably left till the last. The first thought, whether of the child or of the race, turns outwards; and we have eventually to revise the ideas already formed, when we have come to a slightly clearer conception of the haphazard way in which we have formed them. In the Vedas we find no questions asked about human nature. In the Upanishads it is looked at from five points of view:—as being the reproduction of the divine nature; as being the seat of desire, which is eventually to be either satisfied or destroyed; as controlled by caste, which fixes its condition in this life; as controlled by transmigration, which fixes its condition after death; and lastly as capable of salvation, which it hopes to attain in the end, and of sin, which hinders that salvation.

HUMAN NATURE AS THE REPRODUCTION OF THE DIVINE

Each man is the manifestation on a small scale of what is manifested on a large scale in the whole world. This idea is so frequent that almost any of the examples we have looked at already would do to show it. The human body acts as a kind of *memoria technica*, or rosary, by which to tabulate all existence; either you explain the Great Self by the joints of the body, or you explain the joints of the body by the Great Self. When the world was made from the sacrifice of Purusha, each part of him became a part of it; and we find the same list of corresponding parts again and again. It seems that the mind of man cannot conceive of anything except in relation to itself; so each conception, as it turns up, we set against something in ourselves, some need, or power, or affection of our own; and these thinkers of the Upanishads measured things against their bodies. The eye is the sun; the ear, with its power of gathering sounds by no visible means from remote distances, becomes the four quarters of space; hairs become plants; the mind, which is least easily expressed in terms of the body, becomes the moon, perhaps because the moon was the source of the heavenly Soma, the giver of strength and intelligence. This way of looking at the world is to some

extent a material one; it is not that the Great Self has really a body like ours, but that all existing things are its body; and our attention is drawn to it in this bodily aspect rather than as having a will, thought or emotion. That of which the moon is the mind does not present itself as purely spiritual. At the same time, this conception has the great merit of showing us man as being in relation with the whole world. The relation may not be a very exalted one, but it is there; and we can say that, according to it, nothing that exists is alien to humanity.

HUMAN NATURE AS THE SEAT OF DESIRE

The position of Indians with regard to desire is peculiar. Most races seem to find the struggle for the attainment of desire in itself satisfying up to a certain point. But the Indians find little zest in the struggle, and only look to the attainment of the end. This attitude may be attributed partly to the climate; but the political circumstances of the country, however they arose, have helped to produce it. In India race and nationality have never gone together: they could not and did not form a common bond. The states of India comprised people of various races, only held together by their common ruler, and united to him by ties of circumstance, not of race. Political life is far less interesting than in the West: the

organisations that grew up were cruder. Absolute monarchy or tribal oligarchy, and a system of trade-guilds made, not for the growth of new and more developed forms, but only for stability. Art, especially architecture and sculpture and the domestic arts, flourished greatly; but literature, having attained a certain point, ceased to develop, and went on dealing with old legends and stories of passion and adventure, in which the actors, animal or human, have simple characters and motives, and remain the same from age to age. In other nations men have found interest enough for one lifetime in some secondary object, patriotism, art, the righting of some special wrong. Art may have provided such an interest for Indians, but not political life; and the men who might elsewhere have found the material for a happy life in such things where left, with desire working, and with no object outside their private affairs for it to take hold of. They tried to find a true satisfaction for the desire; and when this failed, they took the other line, and hoped to destroy the desire itself. We find both tendencies in the Upanishads.

The things which are classed as the objects of desire are not of a high order; they are the pleasures of this life, innocent pleasures sometimes, sometimes not. The highest desire of the rishi is peace, but that is not usually counted as a desire; and in

this fact lies one weakness of the whole argument. They do not recognise any possible worth in desire, but blame the faculty for it, in itself as well as in its actual working.

In Bṛihadāraṇyaka and Taittirīya we have two scales of bliss, which show us how desire was thought of; they reckon from the happiest imaginable human life as a unit:

If a man is healthy, wealthy, and lord of others, surrounded by all human enjoyments, that is the highest blessing of men. Bṛih. 4, 3, 33.

Let there be a noble young man, who is well-read, very swift, firm and strong, and let the whole world be full of wealth for him, that is one measure of human bliss. Taitt. 2, 8, 1.

All higher degrees of bliss are found by multiplying the degree below by a hundred at each stage, so as to find the amount of bliss belonging to a human Gandharva, a divine Gandharva, the Fathers, the Devas by birth, the sacrificial Devas, the thirty-three Devas, Indra, Bṛihaspati, Prajāpati, or Brahma. The scales differ as to the number of stages and the names given to them; in Bṛihadāraṇyaka the world of Brahma enjoys a bliss a billion times that of the happiest man; in Taittirīya, Prajāpati's bliss is one hundred thousand billion times that of the same man. But in each scale we find the statement that as is the bliss of these worlds, so is the bliss of 'a great sage, who has no desires,' so that we are left

to choose whether we should prefer to enjoy satisfaction of desire with Brahma or Prajāpati, or the end of desire, attained by the sage.

The great advocate for the satisfaction of desire is the author of the Eighth Book of Chhāndogya, who gives us the doctrine of true desires. In the first chapter of this book we are told that the Brahma lives in the 'city of Brahma, the ether in the heart'; and then the question arises:

> If everything that exists is contained in the city of Brahma, all beings and all desires, then what is left of it when old age reaches it, and scatters it, or when it falls to pieces?

The answer is:

> *That* is the true Brahma-city (i.e. the Brahma itself, not the body, is really the city). In it all desires are contained...Those who depart from hence without having discovered the Self and those true desires, for them there is no freedom in all the worlds. But those who depart from hence after having discovered the Self and those true desires, for them there is freedom in all the worlds. Chhānd. 8, 1, 1 to 6.

The true Brahma is that which has true desires; it desires what we really want. We are next told what the true desires are, and they make a sufficiently concrete list:—fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, friends, perfumes and garlands, food and drink, song and music, women.

> Whatever object he is attached to, whatever object he desires, by his mere will it comes to him, and having attained it he is happy.

As a matter of fact this is not what we find in outward life; but we are now told how we may do it, while we are warned by the way that:

These true desires, however, are hidden by what is false.

It is in our own hearts that we find these desires, not in the outer world; if we will but believe it, we shall find them all in our hearts; and it is sleep that will set us free from the obsession of daily life, and let us see them, as we saw in the last chapter in another connection.

The same teaching is given us in another story in Chhāndogya:

Prajāpati said: The Self which is free from sin...That it is which we must search out; that it is which we must try to understand....He who has searched out that Self and understands it obtains all worlds and all desires.

The Gods and Demons, attracted by this teaching, sent respectively Indra and Virocana to learn its meaning from Prajāpati; they stayed with him for thirty-two years; and he then gave them an explanation of the Self, which satisfied Virocana, but failed to satisfy Indra. He told them that this Self, whom they had come to search out and understand, was the person seen reflected in the eye or in the water:

That is the Self, this is the immortal, the fearless, this is Brahma.

So Virocana taught this doctrine to the Asuras; and to this day they worship the body, and hope in vain

by this means to gain this world and the next. But Indra, as he went away, reflected that, though, when he wore his best clothes, the Self reflected in the water had appeared very fine, yet if he had been in rags, crippled or lame, or even dead, the reflected Self would have suffered with him:

> Therefore, (he thought), I see no good in this doctrine.

He went back to Prajāpati, and stayed with him another thirty-two years, when he received another explanation: the true Self is the Self who enjoys himself in dreams. Again he went away dissatisfied, and again he bethought himself that if he had bad dreams the Self must suffer:

> Therefore I see no good in this.

Again he went back to Prajāpati, and again he stayed for thirty-two years, and then he was told:

> When a man being asleep, reposing, and at perfect rest, sees no dreams, this is the Self, this is the immortal, the fearless, this is Brahma.

Again he saw a difficulty:

> In truth he thus does not know himself that he is I, nor does he know anything that exists. He is gone to utter annihilation. I see no good in this.

On this point the teaching of Chhāndogya is opposed to that of Bṛihadāraṇyaka. Here we are expected to look forward to knowing something, not to that state in which, according to Yājñavalkya, the knower

cannot know. There is no good in such a condition: Indra wants a life with relation to something.

Five years more discipleship bring him the final revelation. The Self, Prajāpati says, lives in the body, and:

> When in the body...is held by pleasure and pain,...but when he is free of the body, then neither pleasure nor pain touches him.

When the Self in the heart approaches the highest light, the knowledge of its true self, it is in the highest state. It then enjoys itself independently of the body:

> He moves about there, laughing, playing, and rejoicing in his mind, be it with women, carriages or relatives, never minding that body into which he was born. Chhānd. 8, 7, 1 to 12, 5.

The revelation ends surprisingly, with a sudden drop back to earthly things. We arrive after all only at the idea that the Self is just a thinner kind of body, satisfied with the recollection or fancy of bodily things, and really chiefly concerned with the employment of the senses. We are still in the material world, though it is reduced to a shadow. It is a shock; and yet there are moments when we seem to find a certain saving common sense in this view. It is at least imaginable, if commonplace. The Self who rejoices in this sort of highest state remains to some extent akin to us, though it may

not be a very edifying relationship, while we cannot make any rational conception of the nature of Yājñavalkya's Knower.

From Chhāndogya we turn to Muṇḍaka. Muṇḍaka is coherent and clear; it begins with teaching the lower knowledge; and while we follow that lower way, we are to look for the fulfilment of desire, which is the reward for the fulfilment of duty:

> Whatever state a man whose nature is purified imagines, and whatever desire he desires, that state he conquers, and those desires he obtains. Therefore let every man who desires happiness worship the man who knows the Self. Muṇḍ. 3, 1, 10.

But in the next chapter we learn about the higher way:

> He who forms desires in his mind, is born again through his desires here and there. But to him whose desires are fulfilled and who is conscious of the true Self, all desires vanish, even here on earth. Muṇḍ. 3, 2.

The weak point of this teaching is, as we noticed before, that the higher knowledge is not the development, but the contradiction of the lower; the very powers that have been trained on the lower level have to be destroyed on the higher; two opposite conceptions are set side by side; and harmony is sought by first accepting one, and then throwing it over and accepting the other. Inadequate teaching may lead up to more adequate teaching; but false teaching cannot lead up to anything; and if it has

to be thrown overboard, what is the use of having it at all? If we want to harmonise two apparently opposite doctrines, we must find some wider view in which we see that they are not contrary, but complementary. To state them and leave them lying side by side, or to believe them one after the other, does not reconcile them.

Lastly we come to Yājñavalkya's view of desire, which we have already met in the last chapter. With him, more than with anyone else, there is no distinction whatever between divine and human, there is no process to be worked through before their unity can be realised; what the divine is that the human is, a Knower, with nothing to be known, unattached and unfettered. We are told that the man who desires things, gets them:

> To whatever object a man's own mind is attached, to that he goes strenuously, together with his deed....

And eventually he comes back from the other world, where he reaps the results of his deed, to this world of action:

> So much for the man who desires. But as to the man who does not desire...being Brahma, he goes to Brahma. Bṛih. 4, 4, 6.

We have thus three views of human nature as the seat of desire. In Chhāndogya, where desire is to be fulfilled, the result, after much that is fine and suggestive, is a disappointment: we cannot get

beyond the idea of some kind of material enjoyment, and human nature is left to satisfy itself, if it can, with women, carriages and relatives. In Muṇḍaka we find the ideas of satisfaction and annihilation coupled but not reconciled. In Bṛihadāraṇyaka we reach a consistent idea of human nature by sacrificing the very things by which we recognise it. When human personality is given up, all existence can be conceived of as at any rate one, and we have a vision which is attractive in its simplicity, but which succeeds no better than any other theory in supplying the explanations we want. It is no explanation to say that the many are passing manifestations of the One; for what is it in the One that leads to the passing manifestations? How is it that the One wants to relate itself to anything? We may succeed in reasoning ourselves back into our original oneness; but that does not explain why we ever left it, or secure us against falling again into our illusion of separate being.

HUMAN NATURE AS CONTROLLED BY CASTE

Caste is the provision made in India for man as a member of a community. As we have already noticed, this was not the aspect of a man's life that had the greatest interest for Indian thinkers; and the form that the institution eventually took is

founded on few ideas, but those few are powerful. It is not marked by a power of growth or development into fresh forms, but by a great power of stability. Fresh castes may come into existence, or old ones change their status; but the general form of society remains unchanged so long as caste is the ruling force. Anyone interested in this subject should read the excellent account given of it in Sir Herbert Risley's *People of India*[1]. We have a mythical account of the origin of caste given us in the Rigveda, and also in Bṛihadāraṇyaka[2], in which we are told how the four castes arose from the different members of Brahma; but Sir Herbert Risley tells us that we should be wrong in thinking that there were actually four original castes, which were divided and subdivided till there came to be the vast number we now have. On the contrary, the people were divided into a great number of hereditary trade-guilds, from which the leading castes drew out one by one, first the Brāhman families of learned men and priests, declaring themselves holier than the rest, demanding peculiar respect, and refusing any longer to allow their women to marry men outside their own circle. The military Kshatriya families followed this example, and so by degrees did other classes. The rule that occupation must be hereditary took an unusually

[1] Chapter vi and Appendix v. [2] Rigv. 10, 90. Bṛih. 1, 4, 11.

strong hold in India. There is always a natural tendency in this direction; but in most nations it is modified by the tendency towards individual developments, whereas in India the individual bent that enables a son to break away from his father's occupation was not strong enough to resist the growing force of caste. Caste is also deeply influenced by race feeling, the higher race always struggling to preserve the purity of its descent. Where there were no territorial distinctions this motive would gain in strength; as people must divide themselves somehow, caste distinction took the place of national distinction.

Looking at human nature as controlled by caste, we find that it forms itself into communities neither local nor racial, nor yet founded on any personal characteristic. The difference between one man and another consists in birth, which binds him to a particular occupation; to be born a Chāṇḍāla makes a man not only socially, but essentially inferior to another, born a Kshatriya or a Brāhman. This view consistently carried out, as it is not generally done in other lands, produces a peculiar estimate of human nature. In communities based on racial or local considerations public spirit shows itself, indeed it is the chief characteristic that does show itself. Whether in a wandering tribe, or in a settled society, living in a city or state, military service comes on

all, whatever other duties they may have. The whole free population has to a greater or less extent a share in public affairs; and this general duty is expressed in some form of public and general worship. All classes have their share in the national god, and are expected to take part in ceremonies which express a natural or political relation. The god is sometimes the actual ancestor of his people, and the relationship between them a family bond. The value of the individual is measured by his position as a citizen; the military leader, the fighting man, the counsellor and the priest, who has access to the god, are all of the first value. The god himself is a military chief, and often seems little more than a slightly idealised man. In the Upanishads the sense of public duty and the military deity do not appear; even Indra, the god who comes nearest to this type in Vedic days, has taken to philosophy, and studies the doctrine of the True Self with Prajāpati.

Other communities have been founded on the common bond of some personal characteristic—voluntary armies, trade-guilds, where the membership was not hereditary, monastic institutions, colleges of scholars, benevolent societies, any body to which anyone belongs in order to find fuller opportunities for the exercise of some quality of his own. These do not necessarily shut people out from

communities based on local distinctions; indeed in some cases, as in that of armies, they strengthen the other bond: a devoted soldier is in most cases a devoted citizen. In other cases, especially where religion or learning is the bond, one claim may very likely clash with the other; and the monk or scholar has a bond with people of the same way of thinking in some other country than his own. In such a case the individual has to decide for himself which bond is stronger. Communities of this sort bring out and strengthen that personal characteristic on which they are based. A soldier of fortune in the middle ages was purely a fighting man; his personal character might be neither pious nor patriotic, but it was martial. A scholar, in times of peace, finds himself at home among scholars in every land, and becomes more and more purely a man of learning. Such a character may harden into a type; a man becomes very much a soldier, a monk, or a scholar; but if his individual character cuts across his community character, one of the two will give way. In the West, the question is decided sometimes one way and sometimes the other. In India, caste has almost always proved too strong for personal character, which at last it stifles. We get a clearly marked caste character, a stable society, and a dim sense of personal worth.

We find the caste system recognised all through

the Upanishads, but there is one curious point about it: the Brāhmans are the highest caste, but the Kshatriyas are the possessors of certain doctrines, which they teach to the Brāhmans, sometimes with an apology for undertaking to teach their betters, sometimes with none. The doctrine that the true Self is revealed in sleep, the doctrine of the two ways by which man goes away, and of his return to this world, and the doctrine of the Vaiçvānara self, come from the Kshatriyas. In the difficulty and uncertainty of their relation to the Brāhmans, personal character is revealed. In one case we hear about the conceit of the Brāhman who wants to show off before his royal pupil and is reduced to silence by him[1]; in others about the humility of the Brāhmans who ask instruction, and the courtesy of the kings who give it[2]. But for the lower castes there is no question, and personal character is not expected in them, one may as well be born a hog as a Chāṇḍala.

HUMAN NATURE AS CONTROLLED BY TRANSMIGRATION

There are two forms of transmigration doctrine in the Upanishads—that of Bṛihadāraṇyaka and that of Chhāndogya, one in which there is no mention

[1] Bṛih. 2, 1, 15 ff. Kaushī. 4, 1 ff.
[2] Chhānd. 5, 31. Kaushī. 1, 1. Chhānd. 5, 11, 4.

of animals, and one in which there is[1]. Of this latter doctrine there are again two forms, according to one of which creatures are reproduced again and again in the same forms, while according to the other they pass to higher or lower births. In Bṛihadāraṇyaka Yājñavalkya is holding a debate with Jāratkārava, who asks him what becomes of a dead person, whose various parts have gone back into fire, sun, moon, space and so on. He answers:

> Take my hand, my friend. We two alone shall know of this; let this question of ours not be discussed in public. Then those two went out and argued; and what they said was karma, what they praised was karma, viz. that a man becomes good by good work, and bad by bad work. Bṛih. 3, 2, 13.

Here there is no mention of animals, nor of an elaborate machinery to secure exact retribution.

Again we have images to illustrate the fact that man is born again:

> That person, after separating himself from his members,...hastens back again, as he came, to the place from which he started to new life. And as a caterpillar, after having reached the end of a blade of grass, and after having made another approach (to another blade) draws itself together towards it, thus does this Self, after having thrown off this body and dispelled all ignorance, and after making another approach (to another body), draw himself together towards it.

[1] Animals are however mentioned in Bṛih. 6, 3, 16, but not in Yājñavalkya's teaching which ends with the fourth book.

And as a goldsmith, taking a piece of gold, turns it into another and more beautiful shape, so does this Self, after having thrown off this body and dispelled all ignorance, make unto himself another, newer, and more beautiful shape, whether it be like the Fathers, or like the Gandharvas or like the Devas, or like Prajāpati, or like Brahma, or like other beings. Bṛih. 4, 4, 3, 4.

The Self is said to be like a king, who is greeted on his return home by all his ministers; so do the elements wait on the Self. We see the process of transmigration as a sort of regal circuit from birth to birth, an exploration of all forms of life. This joyousness does not appear in other schemes.

In Chhāndogya we hear how the dead go one of two ways. They may go by the way of the Devas, which leads to the light half of the moon, to the sun, and at last to Brahma, whence they do not return; this is the best way, followed by those who have attained perfect knowledge. Or they may go by the way of the Fathers, to the dark half of the moon:

Having dwelt there till their good works are consumed, they return again that way as they came,

and come down as rain:

Then he is born as rice and corn, herbs and trees, sesamum and beans. From thence the escape is beset with most difficulties. For whoever the persons may be that eat the food, and beget offspring, he henceforth becomes like unto them.

Those whose conduct has been good, will quickly attain

some good birth, the birth of a Brāhmaṇa, or a Kshatriya or a Vaiçya. But those whose conduct has been evil will quickly attain an evil birth, the birth of a dog, or a hog, or a Chāṇḍāla. Chhānd. 5, 10, 5 to 7.

The author appears to have been unduly sanguine in saying that this would happen 'quickly,' for the great commentator, Çaṃkarāchārya says, writing on this passage, that:

The great difficulty or danger in the round of transmigration arises when the rain has fructified the earth, and passes into herbs and trees, rice, corn and beans. For first of all, some of the rain does not fructify at once, but falls into rivers and into the sea, to be swallowed up by fishes and sea-monsters. Then, only after these have been dissolved in the sea, and after the sea-water has been attracted by the clouds, the rain falls down again, it may be on desert or stony land. Here it may be swallowed by snakes or deer, and these may be swallowed by other animals, so that the round of existence seems endless. Nor is this all. Some rain may dry up, or be absorbed by bodies that cannot be eaten. Then if the rain is absorbed by rice, corn, etc. and this is eaten, it may be eaten by children, or by men who have renounced marriage, and thus again lose the chance of a new birth. Lastly there is the danger arising from the nature of the being in whom the food...becomes a new seed, and likewise from the nature of the mother. All these chances have to be met before a new birth as a Brāhmaṇa, Kshatriya or Vaiçya can be secured.

We have another account of the same thing a few chapters further on, but there we are told that the creatures are always of the same kind; they emerge into individual life from one True Being, and are

merged into it again; while merged, they lose their individuality, but when they emerge again they become the same that they were before. This is explained by two examples: the juices of the trees become one honey, and:

> Have no discrimination, so that they might say, I am the juice of this tree or that. Chhānd. 6, 9, 2.

Or again, the rivers run into the sea, and:

> When they are in the sea do not know, I am this or that river. Chhānd. 6, 10, 1.

This scheme is a direct contradiction of the other; there is no retribution in it; the stream of life merely moves out and in, like a pulse, and a creature alternates between actual and latent being, with no further end or prospect. The illustrations of the tree and the river have a suggestiveness and a beauty about them which hides, but does not take away, the confusion of the original thought. For the moment we think something is made clearer; but the more we look into the illustration, the more confused we are. We ask, What is a tree, or the sap of a tree? What is a river, or water? Where does the identity of a river reside? in the water or the banks, or the combination of water and banks? Here it seems to reside in one particular body of water, once present between banks, and now existing in the sea. Really the image illustrates no one point of the question

exactly, and only leaves us with a vague impression instead of a definite idea.

In all this the point of interest for us to-day lies in the nature of the being that has these adventures: What is it that is sometimes a man, sometimes rain, rice, sea-water or an animal? In the next verse we are told that whatever it is, it is always the same:

> Whatever these creatures are here, whether a lion or a wolf, or a boar or a worm, or a midge, or a gnat, or a mosquito, that they become again and again. Chhānd. 6, 10, 2.

But in this none of the other accounts agree; whatever it is they tell us, it is always changing. What we do see is the great, and indeed insurmountable difficulty that besets anyone who tries to go into details; to this day every believer in the doctrine will readily produce his own explanation of the process; and no two explanations will be found to agree, while each of them involves its supporter in an inextricable tangle. The subtlety of his mind may enable him to keep up the argument with fresh details; but the longer he goes on, the further he wanders from any connection with recognisable reality. Trying, with the imperfect understanding of mortal man, and without the systematic observation of facts, to trace the working of justice, and see the harmony which he believes in, he ends in bewilderment and confusion.

The being which is thus carried round and round

the different forms of existence, can only be described as a person during those rare intervals when he either inhabits a human body, or is enjoying himself in the moon. His will and intellect, his affections and even his consciousness, slip from him at every interval and are no part of his essential being, if indeed we should not speak rather of 'it' than 'him.' It is easy enough to meet this difficulty, after a fashion, if we are content to imagine a man putting on one disguise after another, and remaining a man all the time; but this is not what we are told. The rice is real rice, the rain, real rain; personality is a mere temporary characteristic; the man, or whatever the being is who wanders, has personality sometimes, but it is not in itself a person; while it has consciousness, will and memory it behaves like a person; but at other times it is only a power, a principle of identity, uniting a number of different existences. Transmigration destroys human personality; the world described consists of blind forces, among which personality appears occasionally as a passing incident.

HUMAN NATURE AS CAPABLE OF SALVATION OR SIN

It is when we begin to consider what is meant by sin and by salvation that we get nearest to what people think about the nature of man. In every

form of religion there is some ideal perfection to which men hope to attain, which one may call salvation; and there is something hindering that attainment, which may be called sin, though it does not always amount to what we usually mean by that name. It may be that men's desires do not go beyond the attainment of material good things, and these are sought by magical means. Such men in what they do are concerned with themselves only, and are indifferent as to what the power is which they try to move, so long as they can get what they want from it. Magic is a process by which man proposes to control the divine nature, and compel it to serve his own ends; and the hindrance to getting this control consists in making a mistake. Mistake takes the place of sin in such a system. There are whole races, and many individuals in every race, who do not go beyond this level. There are stages in the lives of most individuals when thought can reach no further. Such a system may use the forms or language belonging to a much more spiritual religion as mere charms, so that a spectator might not be able to tell whether the particular act he saw was religious or magical, till he knew the intention in the mind of the actor.

But the salvation at which this system aims leaves off satisfying; man in all progressive races wants not only to enjoy, but also to know. While the

lower level of thought expresses itself in magic, this desire to know expresses itself in philosophy, and the hindrance is ignorance. Yet on t[illegible] level, as on the lower one, the mind is still sh[illegible]p in itself; a man knows nothing immediately except himself; and his salvation will be found in the perfect realisation and knowledge of that self, in living for that self, contented and at peace in it, perfectly balanced, disturbed by no outside influence, knowing indeed that it can know nothing of any outside influence. Some other man, or some scruple of his own mind, might object that such a view leaves the thinker a prisoner to himself, a prey to selfishness, with the best part of his nature stifled, because he lives for himself alone; and he might reply with a show of justice, that he was not living for himself alone in the sense of the objector. The Self of which he is thinking, the Self he has found, is not merely a self that lives cut off from the rest of the world, and trying to lay hold of an unduly large share of the good things of life; far otherwise, it is the only one conceivable being, it cannot want more than its just share, or deprive others of theirs, for all things are it, and when we know that we are it, we know that whatever we meet, or whatever we want, is it, and is ourselves. This is the end to which the pursuit of knowledge, pure and simple, brings us: a man knows his own self and nothing else, and

therefore all that he knows is himself. This is the sphere of Indian thought; and we shall find that most of the teaching of the Upanishads illuminates it.

There is another view of salvation and of sin, and in it we find another conception of human nature. Whether this view is on a higher level or not is the question to be met. Another faculty of human nature is brought into play; and whether that faculty is or is not essential to human nature in its fullest development is exactly the point to be decided. This faculty is loyalty, the relation of one person to another. Neither in magic nor in philosophy does this element appear; but where religion is thought of as the relation to a person, salvation is the perfect harmony of that relation, and the hindrance to salvation is treachery. Loyalty may be more or less intense in its manifestation. It may be the characteristic of a partial, but quite genuine, relation, such as the relation of the general public to a policeman, or other public servant. In its intensest form it is love, in which every element in either personality is in perfect harmony with every element in the other. We shall find this conception of salvation and sin only in a few passages of the Upanishads; but it is not absent.

Salvation as prosperity, Sin as ritual mistake

We need not stay long over the first idea, of salvation as material prosperity, and sin as mistake, or ritual error. It is found in Indian thought, and in all other also; if it is characteristic, it is not specially so. Everywhere and at all times most of us want to be prosperous, and think, deliberately or instinctively, that magic will help us. We might find many examples of this spirit, but one will be enough:

Let a man sing praises, without making mistakes in pronunciation. Chhānd. 2, 22, 2.

Salvation as knowledge, Sin as ignorance

The conception of salvation as knowledge is found, as we have said, all through the Upanishads. Constantly we meet the formula: 'He who knows this' will obtain such and such benefits. So we find in one place:

A man who steals gold, who drinks spirits, who dishonours his Guru's bed, who kills a Brāhman, these four fall, and as a fifth he who associates with them.

But he who thus knows the five fires is not defiled by sin, even though he associates with them. He who knows this is pure, clean, and obtains the world of the blessed. Chhānd. 5, 10, 9, 10.

The knowledge of the five fires can save, even in spite of the sin. What these five fires are does

not appear from the immediate context; but whatever they are, this passage shows that the knowledge of a doctrine is more powerful to save than the commission of a moral fault is powerful to destroy. And almost every cycle of doctrine is closed by the remark that to know this will bring happiness; to know, not to do, something is the way of salvation.

In Kaushītaki we have the trial of the soul, corresponding to the Egyptian judgment in the Hall of Osiris, or the Persian test at the Bridge of the Separator. The myth given us here describes the journey of a soul that goes out on the way of the Gods, after having learnt the truth. He goes through many worlds to the world of Brahma, and comes to the lake of Āra:

> And he crosses it by the mind, while those who come to it without knowing the truth are drowned....He comes to the river Vijarā, and crosses it by the mind alone, and there shakes off his good and evil deeds. His beloved relatives obtain the good, his unbeloved relatives the evil, he has done. And as a man, driving in a chariot, might look at the two wheels, thus he will look at day and night, thus at good and evil deeds, and at all pairs. Being freed from good and freed from evil he, the knower of Brahma, moves towards Brahma. Kaushī. 1, 3.

The method of disposing of good and evil deeds is singular; but the relation to each other of good and evil, as merely complementary halves of character, is plainly stated. When the soul arrives at last at the end of his journey, he finds Brahma sitting

on a couch, and prepares to sit with him, knowing himself to be Brahma; but first he has to answer a series of questions. Brahma says: Who art thou? And he answers that he is the child of the seasons, sprung from the womb of endless space; that is, it seems, he is the child of this lower world, in which the unmanifested becomes manifest in time and space; and he adds that the light, which is the origin of all, is the Self:

> Thou art the Self, that thou art, that am I.

Brahma says to him:

> Who am I? He shall answer, That which is, the true. Kaushī. 1, 6.

Good and evil deeds do not affect the knowledge of truth; they are a mere pair of opposites. So long as the soul knows who he is himself and who Brahma is, he has attained salvation, and can sit on the couch which is built of the Vedas, with the moon-beam for a cushion, and prosperity for a pillow.

Aitareya gives us the clearest and concisest saying on the subject, in answer to the question: Which is the Self? It replies:

> It rests on knowledge. The world is led by knowledge. Knowledge is its cause. Knowledge is Brahma. Ait. 2, 6, 1, 6, 7.

The doctrine that the perfect soul passes beyond the distinction between good and evil is often found.

Indra teaches it to Pratardana; Yājñavalkya teaches it too[1]; and in Taittirīya we find an expression of it which might sometimes awaken a pang almost of envy:

He who knows the bliss of that Brahma, from whence all speech with the mind turns away, unable to reach it, he fears nothing.

He does not distress himself with the thought, Why did I not do what is good? Why did I do what is bad? He who thus knows these two frees himself. This is the Upanishad. Taitt. 2, 9.

It seems that the voice of remorse was not quite easily silenced. The Upanishads hold up before us a certain ideal of great attractiveness; we see a character drawn, of which the most striking feature is peace. It is beyond disturbance, beyond the cares, the troubles, the passionate pleasures of this life; it wills evil to no creature. Such a character has often been contrasted with the eager active spirit that is never satisfied, but always straining after new gain. It is said that we have here a high ideal set before us, and we certainly have something that suggests such an ideal. But before we accept this teaching we must make sure that we understand it, and especially that those of us who come from the West are not unconsciously forcing it into harmony with conceptions taken from another source. The

[1] Kaushī. 3, 8. Bṛih. 4, 4, 22.

rishi who has attained peace has passed beyond good and evil deeds; and what are the deeds in question? The good deeds seem to be those which win the world of the Devas, sacrifice; and the evil deeds, the omission of sacrifice. There is very little description of what good or evil consists in; we do not find such lists of evil deeds as Vasishṭha once gave us, except in the one passage quoted above, about the sins from which knowledge can deliver us. It seems to be taken for granted that everyone knows what a good or evil deed is; there is no enquiry as to whether the evil is in the outward or the inward thought. Zarathushtra, and the Magi after him, in Persia dwell on the triad of good or evil thoughts, words, and acts. Here deeds only are mentioned; it seems as if the rishis only noticed the completed act as seriously good or bad.

Nor is there much pain to be gone through in throwing off evil; there is struggle in entering on the way of peace, in casting off desires, a struggle chiefly against the flesh. The wise man counts the cost, decides that the result is worth the effort, makes it, and finds his reward; he gains peace by the loss of personality, and ends where there is no personality either in himself, in others, or in that with which he has become one. The first characteristic of a person is choice, desire; in India desire is for something unworthy, its satisfaction leaves the soul

craving for something else; but to have no desire is to lose personality, and therefore personality is something unworthy. But this is not a necessary argument. Let us once suppose the possibility of a worthy desire, and its satisfaction may bring that peace, that harmony, which is the aim of every seeker, East and West. Then, after all, the way of Chhāndogya may prove to be the right one; and we may find that what it needed was not destructive criticism, but a right value for morality, deeper insight and longer patience.

Salvation as loyalty, Sin as treachery

The temper which tends to look on salvation as a personal relation is not altogether wanting in the Upanishads. The natural human ties of family feeling and the specially Indian bond of duty to the teacher, are recognised; and indeed we should expect to. find them recognised, seeing that these bonds receive such marked recognition in Indian life; but they are not the subject of much reflection or argument. They are taken as a matter of course, and not dwelt upon.

We have already noticed the passage in which even the heaviest offences against a neighbour may be done away by knowledge of a doctrine. The other references to such relations are also in Chhāndogya, a book which always inclines more to the

personal view than the others. In the story of Satyakāma, who confesses that he cannot tell who his father was, the Guru to whom he makes this admission says:

> No one but a true Brāhmaṇa would thus speak out. Chhānd. 4, 4, 5.

A testimony to the value of speaking the truth. In a later chapter of the same book, we come to something rather similar. It is in the story of Nārada's instruction by Sanatkumāra, which we have met before, and which leads up to one of the definitions of the Ultimate Self. Nārada is being taught that spirit is better than hope, and it seems from the context that spirit here means life:

> For if one says anything unbecoming to a father, mother, brother, sister, tutor, or Brāhmaṇa, then people say: Shame on thee! thou hast offended thy father, mother, brother, sister, tutor, or a Brāhmaṇa. Chhānd. 7, 15, 2.

But when the spirit is gone, one may shove them together with a poker, and burn them to pieces, and it does not matter; but while they live, it is a shame to offend them. The expression 'people say' comes in curiously, there is in it an appeal to the common instinct: people in a general way feel that it is not right to offend those to whom one is bound. But the philosophers have never enquired into this instinct; it is to them part of that lower, unexamined life which comes before the true life

of knowledge and contemplation, and in itself is only fit to be abandoned.

These few passages are the only ones in which loyalty to a personal relationship is set up as the duty of man. In all the explanations given to show that man's true self is one with the Self of the whole world, the place of other people in the scheme of existence is not mentioned. We are left to suppose that we are one with them as we are with the earth, air, fire, water, and ether, in which the Great Self is revealed—so much one that loyalty disappears and only self-realisation is left; so much one that while ignorance may still cloud our vision of the truth there is no thought of treachery; though we must admit that in practice it seems that our neighbour offers a stouter resistance to the process of assimilation than merely material objects do. We can see over our bad deeds as we see over the wheel of a chariot; and there is no horror at what has been, no sense of shrinking from the evil, no thought that anyone else has suffered from it.

CHAPTER IV

THE BHAGAVADGĪTA

When Yājñavalkya went away into the forest, he left behind him his two wives, Maitreyī, the disciple of the Brāhmans, and Kātyāyanī, who had such knowledge only as women possess. We imagined Kātyāyanī as a follower of the Epics, a believer in the reality of outward things, and a seeker after a powerful, friendly, personal God; nor was it only from the Epics that she drew her ideas, for while Yājñavalkya and Maitreyī were discoursing wisdom together, she went to her servants, and out into the village, and learnt the teachings of another and yet older religion than that of the Vedas; and, without reasoning about it, she took Kṛishṇa, Gaṇeça, Durgā, perhaps even Çiva, and others into her theory of life, and found comfort and fear in many an old wild story, told under the peepuls, or by the well at evening. Maitreyī and Kātyāyanī have now to rule their house, which is India, together; to look for a way to make Maitreyī's wisdom available for Kātyāyanī; and to find a place

for Kātyāyanī's beliefs and practices in Maitreyī's thought. Maitreyī looks for the extinction of desire, for the Knower without anything to know, for the ocean without any duality; while Kātyāyanī looks for the satisfaction of desire, and in the end, for a relation with a person.

The book in which the reconciliation of these two views is offered us is the Bhagavadgītā, a Brāhman episode, founded on a Kshatriya story, and inserted in a Kshatriya Epic, the Mahābhārata.

THE STORY OF THE GĪTĀ

The outline of the story is well known, but we will go through it for the sake of bringing out certain points that concern us here.

The Mahābhārata consists of the story of the dispute between the five Pāṇḍava brothers and their cousins, the Kurus. Matters come to a head in the battle on the plain of Kurukshetra, near the modern Delhi; and the enormous armies belonging to either side destroy each other in the course of eighteen days: every combatant is killed, except the Pāṇḍavas, their friend Kṛishṇa and his charioteer. The old king, Dhṛitarāshṭra, ancestor of both sets of princes, wants to know how the battle is going; and after ten days' fighting, a messenger, Sañjaya, goes to him to report the progress of events. He tells how, at the last moment, when the conches

had blown, and the armies were in the act of joining, Arjuna, the second of the Pāṇḍavas, and their greatest champion, struck with remorse at the prospect of slaughtering his relations in the opposite army, appealed to Kṛishṇa, who is acting as his charioteer, and who is an incarnation of Vishṇu, for guidance. Kṛishṇa then answered him in seventeen discourses, and convinced him that it was his duty to fight.

The setting of the story shows us some of the lessons we are to learn from it. It is told by Sañjaya to Dhṛitarāshṭra about what Kṛishṇa and Arjuna said to each other, while both armies waited with uplifted weapons; and Dhṛitarāshṭra listens, though he knows that he has to hear the account of ten days' fighting, in which almost all his family have already perished. Thus twice over the action is interrupted to make way for discourse; and according to the temper of Indian story-telling this is not only tolerable but natural; the motive of action matters more than the action itself.

The Gītā rises from two sources; it is not only based on an incident in the Epics, but on a passage in the Upanishads. In the Kaṭha Upanishad we have a description of a chariot and a charioteer, which is evidently reflected in the description of Kṛishṇa, acting as charioteer for Arjuna.

Know the Self to be sitting in the chariot, the body to

be the chariot, the intellect the charioteer, and the mind the reins.

The senses they call the horses, the objects of the senses their roads. When he is in union with the body, the senses and the mind, then wise people call him the enjoyer.

He who has no understanding and whose mind is never firmly held, his senses are unmanageable, like vicious horses of a charioteer.

But he who has understanding, and whose mind is always firmly held, his senses are under control, like good horses of a charioteer....He reaches the end of his journey, and that is the highest place of Vishṇu. Kaṭha. 1, 3, 3.

In the Upanishad the charioteer is intellect, *buddhi*, a function of the self who owns the chariot, in the Gītā there is a difference, for the charioteer is Kṛishṇa, who reveals himself as Arjuna's teacher, Arjuna saying to him:

I am thy disciple; 2, 7.

as his true self:

Among the Pāṇḍavas I am Dhanañjaya (that is Arjuna); 10, 37.

and as the supreme being.

The interest attached to speculation through the whole book is plain; but in spite of this, the poem is above and before all things practical. The question of action is all through more urgent than the question of thought. Five times over[1] Kṛishṇa urges on Arjuna that he must fulfil his duty and fight; and all the discourses have this object only, to show

[1] 2, 37. 3, 30. 8, 7. 11, 33. 18, 47, 59 or 73.

him the reason why this duty is binding on him. It happens to many a man, as it happened to Arjuna, in the very crisis of his fate to be seized with misgiving, to hesitate in the moment of action and ask himself 'Why?' Whatever the impulse is that rules him in that moment—deliberate choice, loyalty to his fellows, custom, habit, or obedience,—it comes from what is most real in him, and will prove to be the rule of his life afterwards, as the answer to Arjuna's appeal has since proved to be the rule of life and of thought in India. What then is Kṛishṇa's answer?

The teaching of the Gītā falls into two parts, each describing a certain view of life, and the two views being contradictory. We need not go into the question of whether we ought to regard the Gītā as originally by one author, or as belonging to one time. Whoever actually wrote it, it has been accepted in India as a unity, and is offered to us by India as a harmonious expression of Indian thought. We must therefore at first accept all parts of it as of equal value, and see for ourselves afterwards whether the differences between them are such as can be reconciled in the end or not.

THE CONTENTS OF THE GĪTĀ

The first part takes us from the eleventh verse of the second discourse, where Kṛishṇa begins to speak, to the end of the fifteenth discourse, this chapter being a summary of the whole of the first part.

The second part takes us through the sixteenth, seventeenth and half of the eighteenth discourses. All that is essential to this teaching is given in the sixteenth discourse; the rest is explanatory; so that if we want a summary of the whole teaching, we need only read the fifteenth and sixteenth discourses. But to get any real grasp of it we must study two other passages as well, the first twenty verses spoken by Kṛishṇa, 2, 11 to 30, and the great vision of the eleventh discourse.

In the first of these passages, 2, 11 to 30, we have a plain statement of the doctrine from a practical point of view. Arjuna has just declared that he will not fight, he loves and honours the princes opposed to him, they are his kinsmen and his teachers; without them he does not care for victory or dominion, 'blood-stained feasts.' To this outburst Kṛishṇa replies 'smiling.' He says that Arjuna's grief is not wise; wise men do not sorrow for such things, because neither he himself, nor Arjuna nor the sons of Dhṛitarāshṭra were at any

time non-existent, nor can they ever cease to be. That which is once, is always, and always has been; as we pass from one age to another in the course of our lives, so we pass from one body to another in the course of many lives. There is one eternal, indestructible being, who passes through innumerable bodies; it does not matter when or whether these bodies are slain; bodies are mere garments, constantly being worn out and thrown aside; the Self who puts them on is unaffected by any of the events that affect them; weapons, fire, water, and wind leave him untouched. This teaching asserts that all we want is existence; as long as we exist, all is well. The relations of life come and go; there is nothing to grieve for in the breaking of such a relation. Kṛishṇa does not seem to reckon with the fact that Arjuna is grieving over the rupture of an old friendship, apart from the fact that his former friend is to be killed as well as alienated; when anyone passes into a new body he becomes someone else, but this does not matter. Already we see the idea of personality vanishing in the idea of the vital principle.

After the practical point has been made clear, Kṛishṇa goes on elaborating it in one explanation after another, so that Arjuna may be able to get away from the delusions of this life, and to find complete peace and satisfaction in union with the

unchanging and indestructible Self. He describes the difference between action and inaction, which leads to an account of the working of desire, and that to an account of the value of the sacrifice; from that he goes on to the doctrine of the ultimate being, the unmanifest, which proves so difficult to grasp that he passes from it to the doctrine of the penultimate, the manifest, which is given us finally in the eleventh discourse. Arjuna then asks which of these two it is better to worship, the unmanifest or the manifest, Akshara or Īçvara; and Kṛishṇa replies that he is to worship the manifest, Īçvara, which is the best for him, and proceeds to teach him the nature of this manifest power by enabling him to distinguish, first between the knower of the field (Kshetrajña), and the field (Kshetra), words which we may render by subject and object, and next between Purusha and Prakṛiti, words which with more hesitation we may render by spirit and matter; and this brings us to the fifteenth discourse, in which all these teachings are summed up in a short poem of twenty verses.

Leaving a detailed examination of these chapters on one side for the present, we turn to the sixteenth discourse; and here everything is different. We wonder whether we have not suddenly been carried from Kurukshetra to Geneva. We hear how all men are born either godlike or demoniacal; the

godlike get better and better from birth to birth, and eventually reach Kṛishṇa; the demoniacal get worse and worse, and are hurled to lower and lower births for ever. This is really all the doctrine of this system; it is less interesting than the other, because it attempts to account for less; it also lends itself less readily to poetical treatment, and runs off into monotonous accounts of exactly how the different natures act, as they are influenced by the three qualities of harmony, passion, and darkness, of which all things in the world consist. These three qualities or moods (*guṇas*) colour everything. One example of their working is found in caste, as explained in Çaṃkara's commentary on the Gītā; the Brāhmans are all harmony; the Kshatriyas, passion, touched by harmony; the Vaiçyas, passion, touched by darkness; the Çūdras, darkness, touched by passion. Therefore a man's nature is determined by his caste, and therefore Arjuna's one sacred duty is to fight, as becomes a Kshatriya.

This system carries us half through the eighteenth discourse, and then in 18, 14, we come back to the practical application, and this finishes the book. Convinced at last, Arjuna promises obedience; and Sañjaya, in relating the event, assures Dhṛitarāshṭra that fortune and victory are sure to be on the side where he and Kṛishṇa fight.

Such is the Bhagavadgītā. Can we trace in it the

same ideas that we found in the Vedas and in the Upanishads?

We find in the Gītā the three leading conceptions of the divine nature that we found before; but their relative value has changed. The Divine as vital principle has become by far the most important of the three; and we will therefore leave it till the last.

THE DIVINE AS THE SACRIFICIAL PRINCIPLE

Three times, at the beginning of the third, fifth, and twelfth discourses, Arjuna asks whether it is better to renounce all action or to perform it, action meaning especially sacrificial action and the following of the Vedic precepts. In each case the answer, given with varying distinctness, is that it is better to follow the way of action, which is the lower way, because it is easier. The higher way, in which sacrifice is given up, is only for the perfect man; the partly enlightened man, like Arjuna, must indeed go on with sacrifice, but only as a matter of caste duty, and for the sake of the example to others; in this aspect, looked at from the level of the lower life, it is a matter of the first importance; it was instituted in the beginning by Prajāpati, the lord of living things, who brought forth mankind at the same time as the sacrifice, and ordered that

by this means men and devas, the old nature gods, should nourish each other; for:

> Those things which you wish for the Devas shall give you, when they have been fostered by the sacrifice. 3, 12.

Again, Kṛishṇa says:

> This world is not for him who does not sacrifice, how then the other? 4, 31.

But the old feeling that the divine life was in any way present in the sacrifice, or had been given in it for the world, has disappeared. The most that can be said is that the sacrificial act can be so done as not to defile, by the practice of disinterestedness, the surrender of the desire for results:

> When a man's attachment to things is gone, when he is free, when his thoughts are firm in wisdom and he performs sacrifice, all his actions dissolve. 4, 23.

The contrast of higher and lower is not put so plainly as it was in the Muṇḍaka Upanishad, which was intended for those who were themselves following the higher way; indeed it needs careful study to be clear what the teaching really is. Kṛishṇa dwells at considerable length on the importance of sacrifice in the fourth discourse, and again in the ninth[1], where however he points out its inadequacy. He also insists on the duty of setting an example to the ignorant:

[1] 4, 25 to 30. 9, 26. See also 3, 26.

> What a great man does, that also other men do, the world follows the standard he sets. 3, 21.

an argument that has had much weight with other great men since Arjuna. It seems as if the author is anxious not to put the truth harshly; the Kshatriyas are in fact inferior and must follow the lower way; so he tactfully enlarges on the greatness of their position, and says very little about the higher way and the sannyāsis, who have renounced the sacrifice and the Vedas. Çaṃkara's commentary throws light on the matter; he speaks with some vehemence, commenting on Kṛishṇa's saying that:

> Of these two, action and renunciation of action, the rule of action is the better. 5, 2.

He says:

> It is not possible to imagine, even in a dream, that the man who knows the Self can have anything to do with *karma-yoga* (the rule of action), so opposed to right knowledge, and entirely based on illusory knowledge.

And commenting on a similar passage in the twelfth discourse he says:

> The Lord, who is pre-eminently a well-wisher of Arjuna, recommends to him only *karma-yoga*, based on an idea of distinction (between the individual self and the Great Self) and quite dissociated from right knowledge.

But then Çaṃkara was a sannyāsi.

THE DIVINE AS THE ULTIMATE

The idea of the ultimate has become very dim and shadowy indeed in the Gītā. Kṛishṇa distinguishes between the manifest power, which produces and rules the world, Īçvara, and another power beyond it, which he sometimes calls Akshara, the imperishable or unalterable; and with both of these he identifies himself.

The doctrine of the ultimate does not appear as the crown and completion of the revelation; it only occurs in a few places, and then as leading on to the doctrine of the penultimate and manifest. Indeed it is often difficult to be sure which of the two we are hearing about; all the varying conceptions of the subject waver up and down like reflections in running water; we cannot bind the words to one meaning; all we can do is to take the images in which the teaching is given us as they come, and form the best idea we can of them for ourselves, and then see whether the various ideas will unite to form any consistent whole.

At the end of the seventh discourse Kṛishṇa uses various terms—Brahma, Adhyātma, Karma, Adhibhūta, Adhidaiva, Adhiyajña,—and at the beginning of the eighth Arjuna asks him what their meaning is; Kṛishṇa answers that:

> Brahma is the indestructible (*akshara*), the supreme (*parama*). 8, 3.

And later he says:

> Beyond that (beyond this world) is another being, unmanifest beyond the unmanifest, eternal. He does not perish in the fall of all beings. 8, 20.

In the following verses this ultimate being is still called *akshara*, and *Purusha para*, 'supreme male.' The word Purusha for the supreme being appears again in the fifteenth discourse, the summary of the first part, where we are told that:

> There are two males in this world, perishable and imperishable,...but the ultimate male is another; it is announced as the highest Self. 15, 16, 17.

This supreme being is referred to again as *na sat na asat*, 'neither being nor not-being[1]'; and in these passages we have all that Kṛishṇa has to tell us about the ultimate. So undefined an existence cannot interest us much; we learn that it exists, but what it is we do not learn. The fact of its existence is indeed the original fact of all facts; but as it is apart from all conditions and relations there seems to be very little to be said about it. We turn from the consideration of the unmanifest Akshara to that of the manifest Īçvara with a certain relief, and also with a certain disappointment in having to allow that in the end it is not the ultimate that matters most.

[1] 13, 12.

THE DIVINE AS THE VITAL PRINCIPLE

The manifest power is first described for us in the seventh discourse, and again we are told that it is double. The lower part consists of the elements of the world, earth, water, air, heaven, mind, intelligence; and the higher part is what forms and supports all this. Kṛishṇa enters into the world in order to taste experience; and he is the goal to which the wise man reaches at last. In the fifteenth discourse we find Purusha as the supreme, and a portion of him is the animating power of the world. When in the world, he is concerned with having experiences, tasting and observing the objects of the senses, which however do not affect him[1]; he is seated in the hearts of all, and wisdom and ignorance are from him[2]. The fullest account of the divine power manifest in the world is given in the ninth, tenth, and eleventh discourses. In the ninth, Kṛishṇa declares himself to be the origin of all things:

> Controlling my own nature I send out again and again this whole multitude of subject beings by the power of nature. 9, 8.

In the tenth, he is their highest product, the best example of each sort of existence:

> Among the Ādityas I am Vishṇu,...among the Pāṇḍavas I am Dhanañjaya. 10, 21, 37.

[1] 15, 6 to 9. [2] 15, 15.

Finally in the eleventh he reveals himself, at Arjuna's request, bodily as the universal form, that of which the whole world is the visible expression.

The vision of the eleventh discourse is the crown of this system of doctrine, and the most striking part of the whole book. It begins with Sañjaya's account of what Arjuna saw; his idea of majesty is infinite number; he describes the appearance of an idol, multiplied to infinity, endless faces and features, ornaments, weapons, garlands, seen in every direction[1]. Then Arjuna speaks, and gives his own account of the infinite form, with all orders of being contained in it and gazing on it[2]; presently[3] the vision becomes more terrible than before; he sees the god, whom he hails as Vishṇu, not only bringing forth all life, but destroying it; Kṛishṇa's open mouths are like blazing furnaces, and draw in the hostile armies, like moths that fly into the fire, while their princes are caught and crushed in his teeth; and at last not only the two armies but all mankind and all worlds are consumed. Then Kṛishṇa himself speaks, and names himself as Time[4], calling on Arjuna to fight; for whether he fights or not, his enemies are already doomed. Hereupon Arjuna describes no more, but offers worship, especially praying for forgiveness, because he has not known

[1] 11, 10 to 12. [2] 11, 15 to 30.
[3] 11, 23. [4] 11, 32 to 34.

Kṛishṇa in his mortal disguise, and has not honoured him as he should have done; again and again he offers him homage, as the first of gods, the ancient Male[1], by whom all is filled; and Kṛishṇa at last resumes the form by which Arjuna had known him before, telling him that this vision cannot be seen by means of study or of sacrifice, but only through undivided devotion, *bhakti*.

It is the vital impulse itself which stands before us, infinite, awful, and yet speaking in a brief, definite command. Like Elijah on Horeb[2], Arjuna sees the rush and stir of a vast force; but in the one case it is a preparation for what is to come, a sort of premonitory shudder running through nature at the approaching revelation; in the other it is the actual life from which the divine voice speaks. The vision of Elijah, more even than other visions of Hebrew prophets, is marked with a sense of awe and restraint. The prophet is recalled to himself from his impatience and despair, sobered, strengthened, and sent on an errand; he knows and acknowledges the voice that speaks, and goes without question. Arjuna too is overwhelmed. He is moved to the inmost depth of his nature, and in his hymn of adoration lays open his whole heart, holding back nothing. There is an element of terror in his awe; the appeal he makes is to something that

[1] 11, 38. [2] 1 Kings xix.

overcomes him by its strength, without altogether convincing his reason; his attitude towards it is one of utter submission; but even so he cannot give the obedience he promises till he has first had a further explanation of the nature of the speaker, and the revelation leads up to a question: Is he indeed to worship this manifested power, Īçvara, or is he to look for the Akshara behind it?

The answer given in the twelfth discourse, as we have already seen, is that he is to worship Īçvara; and in fact it is this vision of Īçvara that has taken possession of the thought of India and rules it to-day. It was this that passed into the Bhakti religions, the worship of Vishṇu and Çiva by faith and devotion; it inspired the songs of poets, and covered temples and palaces with carving; it speaks to us in all the crowd of figures, divine, semi-divine, heroic, human, or animal, on walls and pillars, in the lingas and the bulls, by emblem and suggestion; it says nothing of morality, of righteousness or of personal character, but speaks always and urgently of physical life.

HUMAN NATURE AS THE REPRODUCTION OF THE DIVINE

We come to the conception of human nature given us in the Gītā. The old idea of human nature as the reproduction of the divine has disappeared.

It seems that the Gītā is too entirely practical in its aim to concern itself with a purely speculative scheme. The interest of the book is human only; there is no cosmology in it, no account of the origin either of man or of the material world, beyond the statement that they came from the supreme.

HUMAN NATURE AS THE SEAT OF DESIRE

In the Upanishads we found the annihilation or the satisfaction of desire still a matter for debate. Taking them as a whole, we found that the balance inclined towards the annihilation of desire; the most complete and characteristic system of the Upanishads declared itself on that side, and the reason for this decision lay partly in the fact that there was no ideal for any worthy fulfilment of desire, which would not end in satiety or sorrow. In the Gītā this view is maintained, and desire, *kāma*, is counted as the enemy of man and the root of all sin.

Yet there is another view in the book, never expressed, but taken for granted. The perfect man is still the creature of desire, for he seeks conscious bliss in contact with Brahma, the eternal[1]. There is a confusion of thought at the root of the teaching about desire between kāma, restless craving, and deliberate choice, the act of the will. Kṛishṇa looks

[1] 6, 28.

for deliverance from craving in indifference; he urges it in several passages:

When joy and grief, gain and loss, victory and defeat are the same to you, then get ready for battle, and thou shalt by no means incur sin. 2, 38.

But indifference makes an end of choice, and also of bliss, for a really indifferent man is untouched by bliss. So it comes about that we sometimes get the denunciation of desire, and sometimes its assertion:

I am alike to all beings, none is hateful to me, nor dear; but as for those who worship me with devotion, they are in me, and I in them. 9, 29.

And in the twelfth discourse he speaks of his devotees being dear, even very dear to him[1]. The fact is that when Kṛishṇa says a man is to be indifferent, he means that he is himself to be the one object of desire.

HUMAN NATURE AS CONTROLLED BY TRANSMIGRATION

Caste and transmigration are in undisputed possession through the book. Transmigration is taken for granted, and the details are not worked out, for which we may be thankful, remembering our earlier experiences; it is part of the conception of the one life, expressing itself continually in new forms. We

[1] 12, 19, 20.

find the idea in Kṛishṇa's earliest teaching[1], and we find it again in the fifteenth discourse, not so much carrying the notion of retribution or development, as merely giving an account of the wandering of the one self through the world, tasting all experience. It is here akin to Yājñavalkya's teaching, which he illustrated by the images of the caterpillar and the goldsmith. We find transmigration again in the sixteenth discourse; and here it is the individual soul who travels, always upwards, or always downwards, while the supreme power acts as judge, or rather as the weight in the balance, for the judgment is automatic, not rational; the wandering soul has no choice, and his destiny falls to him of necessity.

HUMAN NATURE AS CONTROLLED BY CASTE

Caste rules everything. Put very shortly the message of the Gītā is that a man must do his caste duty, and a wise man does it with indifference; all the rest is only added to make this acceptable. In the first discourse Arjuna protests against the destruction of the Kurus because such a destruction leads to confusion of caste. Later Kṛishṇa says that if he did not act he would cause confusion of caste, and again that the four castes were sent forth by him. In the eighteenth discourse there is a minute description of the varying natures of the three upper

[1] 2, 11 to 30.

castes[1]. At the beginning of his instructions Kṛishṇa urges on Arjuna his duty as a Kshatriya, according to which it seems that he must in any case fight, and that it is his good fortune to be fighting in a lawful war[2]. Again he says:

Even the wise man acts according to his own nature; beings follow nature, what can force do? 3, 33.

In one passage he says that even those whose birth is sinful, women, Vaiçyas, even Çūdras, are able to walk on the highest road, 'far more then' the Brāhmans and royal rishis; and at the end of all he warns Arjuna that even if he refuses to fight he cannot help himself:

Nature will compel thee. Bound by thy own work, born of thy nature, O Kaunteya, thou shalt do perforce that which, from confusion of mind, thou dost not wish to do. 18, 59, 60.

Thus as ever, when caste comes in at the door, personality goes out at the window.

HUMAN NATURE AS CAPABLE OF SALVATION OR SIN

There is only one conception of salvation in the Gītā, contact with the supreme, which is infinite bliss:

The yogi, when he has put away corruption, always concentrating himself, easily obtains the endless bliss of contact with Brahma. 6, 28.

[1] 1, 43. 3, 24. 4, 13. 18, 41 to 44. [2] 2, 31.

It is the goal of each individual, harmony for each liberated soul, not a kingdom of God, whether in this world or another.

The character of the perfect man is described clearly in several places, but especially in the sixth discourse. He is a Yogi, who follows the way of disinterestedness, doing acts, but having no concern with their results. Without Çaṃkara's help we should find it hard indeed to be sure what is really meant—whether this ideal is really the highest of all, or whether it is not a yet higher state to have renounced even disinterested action. Çaṃkara assures us that the latter is indeed the case: the lower way is only said to be perfect for the sake of courtesy. It is at any rate the highest way set before us in the Gītā. This practice of courtesy is somewhat bewildering; but by allowing for it we can get consistent doctrine on the subject of the perfect life. The really perfect man, the Sannyāsi, is referred to, but he is not described; we hear about the man who attains perfection on the lower level, the Yogi, and understand that in another birth he may attain to absolute perfection[1].

The perfect man is free from all disturbance, it is not the rightness of his act, but the freedom of his mind that delivers from sin; he:

Looks alike on a Brāhman, endowed with wisdom

[1] 6, 45.

and modesty, a cow, an elephant, a dog, and a dog-eater. 5, 18.

and also on:

Lovers, friends, enemies, the indifferent, neutral, hateful, kinsmen, good, and bad. 6, 9.

He is told to draw back his senses from the objects of sense, as a tortoise draws in its legs on all sides[1], an expressive image to anyone who has ever watched a tortoise, withdrawing itself into its private world, all sign of life vanishing, as the wrinkled face and straggling limbs disappear, and the shell settles down gently on the ground.

Yet the life to which this process leads is not one of absolute detachment; it is not the realisation of the one only Self, which is oneself, and the self of all; it is a relation. In this the Gītā has departed from the doctrine of the Upanishads; but it is not wholly clear with what the relation is established; it is generally said to be with Kṛishṇa, but sometimes it seems to be with that further power beyond Kṛishṇa, of which we found it difficult to form any intelligible idea.

The words most used with reference to salvation are *Yoga*, 'rule,' and *yukta*, 'harmonised,' from the same root; the ruling idea of them is harmony, balance.

There are three things that especially hinder the

[1] 2, 58.

attainment of balance or harmony,—desire, doubt, and bad conduct. Desire is a form of ignorance, for it clouds the mind; doubt is akin to treachery, or at least to disloyalty; bad conduct is what offends against the general sense of right.

Desire, '*kāma*,' is the craving that is never satisfied; it is not a rational choice, though it chooses; and in the Gītā no distinction is drawn between the two things. This one is evil in itself, and it leads to more evil:

> When a man contemplates material things, the objects of the senses, attachment to them arises. From attachment desire arises, from desire, anger is born. 2, 62.
>
> It is desire, it is anger, born from passion, very greedy, very evil; know this as our enemy here. 3, 37.

But doubt is as bad. In the rebuke administered to doubt there is a ring of earnestness which reminds us that the Gītā is not a speculative essay, devoted to the mere search for truth; it is an exhortation, and brings a command to men in general. They must hear, and they must obey; nay, more, there is a real danger threatening the world if they refuse. With the idea of personality in the divine being, that is with the idea of Kṛishṇa, the manifest deity in a personal form, the idea of treachery appears:

> For the doubter there is neither this world, nor the next, nor happiness. 4, 40.

Resolute reason is one...the judgments of the irresolute split into many branches, and have no end. 2, 41.

In the sixteenth discourse especially we find sin thought of as bad conduct, and described in lists of various sins—hypocrisy, pride, arrogance, anger, harshness, ignorance, want of purity, of courtesy, or truth[1]. But in the earlier part of the book too, we find sin referred to in a rather casual manner, apparently as bad conduct; and it seems to be a thing easily got rid of by the man who has turned his attention to being wise. Sin of conduct never seems to trouble the Indian mind nearly as much as sins of the intellect. By knowledge (*jñāna*) even the worst of sinners may get over his sin, like a man crossing the sea on a raft[2]; and:

A very sinful man (who worships Kṛishṇa) must be counted good, for he has resolved well. 9, 30.

There is in the Gītā another hindrance to salvation, which consists not in any act of man, but in the nature of the divine being. Kṛishṇa says that the difficulty of knowing him rises from something in his own nature which deludes people, as the power of a juggler deludes the beholders. Twice he describes its working:

I am not clear to all, hidden by my magic power. This bewildered world does not recognise me, unborn and unchangeable. 7, 25.

[1] See 16, 7, 8. [2] 4, 36.

And again at the very end of his teaching:

> Īçvara stands in the hearts of all, all beings spin by illusion, mounted on a whirligig. 18, 61.

Çaṃkara puts his own comment into Kṛishṇa's mouth: 'Alas! it is very miserable,' thus does the Lord express his regret: 'that yoga-māyā by which I am veiled, and on account of which people do not know me, is mine, i.e. subject to my control, and as such it cannot obstruct my knowledge,...just as the glamour (*māyā*) caused by a juggler (*māyāvin*) does not obstruct his own knowledge,...nobody knows me and seeks refuge with me. Just for want of knowledge of my real nature nobody worships me.'

We are shocked by the theory that the author of our being plays with us, as a juggler plays with his puppets; yet it is not unreasonable, so long as the relation between him and us is thought of apart from morality, that is apart from personal character. We are becoming accustomed to the idea that we must be content with regard to material things not to see them as they are; solid matter is, it appears, a collection of whirling vortices; colour exists only for the eye that sees; we can never have exact proof of the circumstances of any event; one thing only is really absolutely clear to each of us, and that is personal character; we are sure that two and two make four, and we are ready to argue the matter; we trust our beloved friend, and there is an end of

it. Even the exception goes to prove the rule; to be mistaken about things is a passing incident, but to have been taken in by a person we trusted is an intolerable evil. So if we think of God as a person we may cheerfully acknowledge that our ideas of his methods, his action on us through the things around us, were crude and mistaken; but we cannot rationally believe that he deceives us about himself; for to do so makes nonsense of all our beliefs. Yet this is the tragic conclusion to which Kṛishṇa leads us; we individually may be among the very few, not one in thousands[1], who can attain true knowledge; but men in general follow natural sense and go wrong.

THE GĪTĀ AND THE FOURTH GOSPEL

We have followed the old lines of thought into the newer time, and have traced them in some detail. We must try now to form some idea of the Gītā as a whole, and to see how far it has fulfilled its purpose.

It was meant to reconcile the thought of the philosophers with the life of the common people; and it has attempted this by announcing a revelation, made at a specified time and place by a certain person. The fact that such a person existed, if he did exist, was in itself the revelation; the fact that

[1] 7, 3.

he comes forth from time to time for the protection of the good, the destruction of the wicked, and the establishment of the law[1], in itself shows the divine nature. Hence arises the apparent connection between the Gītā and the Fourth Gospel, which has sometimes led people to think that one copied from the other. There is no reason to suppose that there was any borrowing, or that either author knew of the existence of the other; but the two are teaching the same doctrine, and it is natural that there should be likenesses of thought and even expression. Each claims to be founded on an historical event; and each declares that the divine has manifested itself in human form on earth. Our belief in the doctrine is dependent on our belief in the historical event. We cannot press this point too strongly; it is essential in both cases.

There is no evidence that such a man as Kṛishṇa ever existed; indeed there is evidence to show that he did not. The war, of which the Mahābhārata keeps the memory alive, must have been somewhere about 800 B.C., the Gītā is not older than 300 B.C. In the interval of some five hundred years between battle and book there is no sign that anyone had ever heard of Kṛishṇa, either as a teacher or as a complete divine incarnation; there was no body of believers in him; there is no trace of him in literature in this

[1] 4, 8.

character; the Kṛishṇa of the Gītā is not an historical figure, and his connection with legend is slight; he is imaginary, and the product of one of the most remarkable and powerful imaginations that the world has ever seen[1].

THE MOTIVE OF THE GĪTĀ

How then did the book come to be written? What led anyone to conceive and set forth such an idea as that the divine power should manifest itself in this way?

The author is urged, in the first place, by the necessity of carrying on life somehow. This necessity he acknowledges, without explaining it; he allows it in men, for, he says, they must act:

> Without action even bodily life cannot be secured. 3, 8.

Kṛishṇa himself acts:

> These worlds would fall into ruin if I did not act. 3, 24.

On his own showing there is no reason why they should not; they are of no advantage to him; and we are to be indifferent to any advantage they might bring to us. We are left in the dark as to the motive which compels action, and the author leaves us to detect the gap in his system for ourselves; yet it remains, though unacknowledged; and the whole doctrine rests in the end on nothing; the ultimate

[1] On this subject see *Gītā and Gospel*, Farquhar.

ground of it is unknowable, and so far as we are concerned, irrational; and in so far as it holds together at all, it is a compromise between that irrational background and an apparently rational world. The achievement of the book is that it has provided a scheme by which, up to a certain point, life can be made to seem rational.

The strength of the Gītā lies in its adaptability; there is an argument to suit every view. If the necessity for action is to be urged, we have the verse already quoted:

> Do thou always perform action, for action is better than inaction; without action even bodily life cannot be secured. 3, 8.

Or if we are to understand its essential unreality we have:

> When it is deceived by egoism the self thinks 'it is I who act.' 3, 27.

If common morality is to be maintained, there is the whole of the sixteenth discourse, with its continuation in the seventeenth and eighteenth discourses; but the hollowness of the conventional view is declared in the saying:

> The Lord does not take count of anyone's sin, nor yet their good deeds. 5, 15.

If it is a plain rule of life that is wanted, the whole book is an exhortation to follow the rule of caste—

the old, familiar, traditional rule; if convention is to be put on one side and search made for the one reality, we have only to realise that the book itself is a concession made to the partly enlightened, and that there is a yet higher way possible, where its standards do not apply.

If the seeker demands a personal God, we find the assertion throughout that such a being exists, and that he manifested himself as Kṛishṇa at Kurukshetra, that he knows and watches the lives of all men, is their judge, their saviour, and is sometimes even said to love them.

If, on the other hand, anyone rebels against the limitations which seem to be necessary to such a conception, he can take refuge in some remoter existence, of which nothing can be said, except that it is, and that it is unchangeable, self-existent, eternal, infinite.

Wonder and the delight in mystery find a sphere in the contemplation of that unknown being and of its working, especially in the vision of the eleventh discourse; and mental subtlety finds exercise in tracing the working of the various systems.

The power of the Gītā lies in these things; but here also lies its weakness, for at each point we find suggestion, but not satisfaction; there is great power of seeing difficulties, real difficulties, but little power of solving them; and in the end we are left to fall

back on convention and caste; there is no new life-giving principle revealed, to include old opposites in a new unity.

The author of the Gītā found himself called on to produce a fresh interpretation of life at a turning-point in the history of his race. Of this turning-point we know little except what we can gather from the book. A class of thinkers had grown up, who found complete satisfaction neither in philosophy nor in the Epics. They demanded at once the reasoned arguments of the philosophers, and the personal interest of the gods. On the one hand, as educated men, they could not be content without some examination of belief; on the other, their sense of personality, their affections and interest in life, demanded affections and interest in that power of which life is the expression. The gods, in whom they actually professed belief, were no longer of any use to them; as we have seen, they were not persons, but at best pictures, and could make no claim on the love or reverence of their worshippers, except for old sake's sake; they could do nothing to attract or educate the new powers of love and wonder that were growing up.

The Great Self of the Upanishads was no better; a man's own self, however great, cannot lead him beyond himself. Against the doctrine of the Great Self, carried out with entire consistency, the sense

of right and wrong continually asserts itself, the sense that there is a distinction, that good and evil are not the same, and that it is our business to choose between them, even if only in their lowest form of pleasure and pain. Arjuna's unreflecting instinct tells him that it is wrong to destroy his cousins and friends, and he announces that he will not do it[1], and in the very act of so resolving claims to be a person, exercising a will and expressing his belief in a world governed by personal considerations, the sphere of action of a personal God. In his whole argument the author never explains this impulse of Arjuna's will; he sets custom against conscience, and justifies it by mere assertion; yet he goes so far as to provide an imaginary person for want of a real one, and his readers were satisfied with the substitute. So Arjuna's problem remains unsolved.

If, for the sake of the argument, we suppose that this conscience, the sense of distinction of a difference between good and evil, is not something accidental and superficial, but is something essential in human nature, we shall presently find that it is the essential; that it is in this, a free will, that man consists, that the world is founded in righteousness, and that the ultimate, the power that lies beyond it, is also a will, a person. Every argument must

[1] 2, 9.

come to this at last, the question between fate and free-will, between a personal God and an impersonal world. As far as argument is concerned, the question is endless; for fate always wins by argument, and the result is always upset by life. But if after all it should prove that we have come to wrong conclusions through trusting to insufficient data and immature faculties, we may yet find free-will a more satisfactory answer to the riddle of life than fate.

But the belief in a personal God makes a demand from which the opposite one is free; it makes life more intense and more inward; it deals with motive rather than with outward action; it points to harmony in life rather than to mere equipoise; it is spiritual rather than material.

The teachers of India refused this line of thought in the early days, when they turned from Varuṇa to Indra; they refused it again, in the time of the Upanishads, when they looked for revelation by knowledge only; and again when the writer of the Gītā gave to his country a revelation founded on fancy, and they were willing to accept it.

CHAPTER V

INDIA AND OTHER NATIONS

We have followed the main stream of early Indian thought from its sources in the Rigveda, through its most perfect manifestation in the Upanishads to its practical application in the Bhagavadgītā. It will be easier to form a just idea of what it really is and wherein its special character lies, if we compare it with the thought of other races and nations of the ancient world.

EGYPT

Of all the great religions of the ancient world that of Egypt stands nearest to primitive thought. Permanence is the mark of Egypt. In a land where not only buildings, books and paintings, but grains of corn, flowers and even footprints, can be preserved for thousands of years, men's thoughts naturally dwell on the hope of keeping the things they value in the shapes they know, for ever. Egypt troubled little about the origin of things, and still less about the final end; but turned all its energy to the task

of overcoming the great interruption, death, and planning to make a fresh start beyond it on the old lines. Whether a man looked on the sun as the divine power, or whether he looked on Osiris as the great king, what he wanted was not a new life in another world, nor yet a clearer revelation of truth in a higher state of being, but another Egypt and another Nile, where things might go on as before.

Egyptian thought was much occupied with magic, but there was also a strain of morality in it, which was remarkable in such a connection. It appeared in the religion of Osiris; when the man comes into his judgment-hall, to see his soul weighed against truth, he protests his innocence in forty-two assertions, addressed to forty-two gods. Some of these assertions show an unusually advanced idea of sin, not only murder, adultery and sacrilege are mentioned, but slander, lying, oppression of the poor, indulgence of anxious care or vain remorse. At the time of Ikh-en-aton, the reforming pharaoh, who introduced the worship of the solar disc and revolutionised Egyptian religion for a while, there was a movement towards repentance and amendment of life, which left its mark on the hymns of the period, but it seems to have died out; and in later times Egypt again put its trust in magic. There is a strange mixture of spiritual and material about the people,

they recognised the need for pure hearts to display in the Hall of Judgment, and had them carved in stone, and laid on their breasts in their coffins.

Egyptian thought as set forth in art is full of dignity and mystery. There is a peculiar satisfaction in the long straight monotonous rows of gods and men, sitting or marching in stately attitudes, and with solemn gestures, and painted in brilliant colours. It was a strange faith that led the Egyptians to paint the inside of tombs richly, working in the darkness to adorn miles of underground passages, which were closed to all living men as soon as the dead came to inhabit them. The colossal statues and enormous pyramids and temples rouse the same wonder; and Egypt leaves us with a mingled vision of awe and splendour—the intense sunshine and gorgeous sky, above a land of vast ruins, silent, mysterious, and older than any other works of civilised man.

The thought of Egypt is like the first attempts of some imaginative child, looking, wondering, but hardly reasoning; the race expresses itself in architecture, sculpture, and painting, but not in literature. This thought reached its greatest height in the worship of Osiris, a god of many natures, in whom we find traces of the moon, the spirit of trees and of corn, and an actual human king, who taught his people arts and industries, while his wife, Isis, became

the type of faithfulness, fortitude and wisdom. But even here magic had the last word.

CHALDEA

There were other nations in which religion was closer to patriotism. In Chaldea the gods were at once heavenly bodies and rulers of cities; and their fortunes rose and fell with those of the cities they governed. As Babylon became greater than Nippur, so Marduk became greater than Bel; and legend reflects the fact and accounts for it after its own fashion.

ASSYRIA

When the Assyrians succeeded the Chaldeans as the dominant power in Mesopotamia, they carried the idea of political life a step further. Their god, Assur, was a conqueror and carried his armies far away into other lands. We see him on the monuments, presiding over battlefields and the sack of cities, the slaughter of captives, the carrying off of their families, and the taking of tribute. It is a brutal religion with no thought, so far as we can see, beyond military glory. The art is like that of Egypt; but the grace and mystery is gone, though some of the dignity is the same. Yet such as it is this religion carries the suggestion that its god is to be king, though only conqueror and tyrant, of the whole world.

CHINA

Political duty is the ruling thought of China. In Chaldea and Assyria the king's advantage is the centre of everything; in China the one object is the public welfare. The *Shû King*, the oldest Chinese history book, opens with the account of a reforming king, under whose sway universal harmony was established, the people all became brightly intelligent and were transformed, and 'the result was concord.' Book after book we read of those who succeeded and those who failed in the same work; one minister of a dissolute king sings sadly:

In my dealings with the millions of the people I should feel as much anxiety as if I were driving six horses with rotten reins. *Shû King, Songs of the Five Sons.*

So also a king in a time of terrible drought cries:

The drought is excessive; all is dispersion and the bonds of government are relaxed....

There is no one who has not tried to help the people;... I look up to the great heaven, but its stars sparkle bright. My great officers and excellent men, ye have reverently drawn near to Heaven with all your powers. Death is approaching. But do not cast away what you have done. You are seeking not for me only, but to give rest to all our departments. I look up to the great heaven; When shall I be favoured with repose? *Major Odes of the Kingdom.* 3, 5.

The divine nature is vaguely conceived, and shows

itself chiefly in inspiring this sense of anxious responsibility. The ancient Chinese stand before us in their literature as an honest and diligent race, with a great love for the common sights of nature, the fields, the flowers, the birds and changing seasons, not much given to abstract thought, caring little for war and glory. China can tell the dates of its emperors and its periods of anarchy from 2197 B.C. to the present time; a Chinaman is always a citizen, even the dead are still citizens, who watch over the affairs of their descendants and take part in them; the chief business of life is to rule or to be ruled; its motive is public duty; the divine power is the supreme ruler.

ROME

Kindred to the thought of Assyria and China, but higher, is that of Rome. In Rome the early worship of countless spirits, ruling over every department and every sub-department of life, was much the same as Chinese spirit-worship to-day. Every implement in house and field, every stage of growth in child or plant, every act of life, had its deity. But the god of the pestle and the goddess of the broom, the deity who led the child across the room, and the other who led him back, all the different gods who ruled over a single ear of corn till it was full grown, and the singular being

whose kingdom was a tax, find their fullest expression in the genius who guarded what was really the Roman's chief care, the life of the family, personified in its father, and later, the life of the state, personified in its emperor. This was the true object of a Roman's worship, whether it was expressed by decrees deifying the Caesars or by the devotion paid to Jove. Jove was the father of the city, enthroned on the Capitol, receiving the triumphant armies as they came in with the spoils of all the world. The Emperor was the representative of Rome too; and loyalty to the man meant loyalty to the city. But Rome was not a mere conqueror like Assyria; to Rome conquest was an incident, glorious, but passing, to be got through as quickly as possible, and with as little inconvenience to the conquered as might be. The ultimate ideal was not only a triumphant state, but an ordered world, where Rome, who only could rule, should rule, and other nations should live their lives according to their powers.

The worship of the nation is an advance from the search after merely individual advantage; for a long time it calls out much of what is best in human nature, but it cannot satisfy us completely. The Romans themselves felt this and borrowed from Greece, Egypt and Syria, but never quite supplied the want, so that the foreign gods either, like Apollo,

shrivelled into conventional symbols, or, like Isis, degenerated into fanciful superstitions, while patriotism, finding its only end in itself, fell back from a search after the divine reality, into the old worship of the vital impulse.

All the national religions but one have died out with the nations who followed them; Chinese religion survives with China, but makes no attempt to spread beyond it. If new national gods arise, by whatever names they are called, whether they take shape in a king or in an imaginary figure decked with symbols, or if they take the names that belong to a really personal form of religion, they must needs follow the others, and can never be the ultimate reality for mankind. Political worship is still, as a matter of fact, the religion of many men. Of late years it has been announced in more than one place as a new and precious discovery. Men think it a virtue to exalt their own countries at the expense of others, and to insist that the rest of the world owes everything to them; every nation and every race in turn passionately claims all the best gifts for itself, and covers up its failures with angry excuses. It is strange to see the heat with which an ignorant man will throw himself into a discussion to defend the doings of persons in remote ages, whom he supposes, often wrongly, to have been of the same race as himself; nothing is too good

for his own chosen people, nothing too base for everyone else.

With its introduction to the West India has been touched by the attraction of nation-worship, but the idea is not natural to it. The people of India have never before compared themselves as one body with other nations, the worship of India as a single ideal is not characteristic; and has only been learnt from foreigners. Caste has been hard and cruel in its working in many ways; but it may have done something to preserve the country from the dazzle of nation-worship.

GREECE

Of all nations Greece is the most akin to India; and we look to Greek thought to throw a special light on Indian thought. Its character has been summed up as 'intellectual passion for truth[1].' To see this passion fairly we must look at Greek thought, not at any one moment in its long history, but in its whole course, from the time of its dawn in the days of Homer, to the time of its decay under the Roman Empire. The interest in matters of fact is always the same, though it takes different directions: the Greeks care first for things as they seem to be; but as they examine into appearances their

[1] *Plato and Christianity*, Temple.

idea of the nature of reality changes. In the Homeric age and earlier, the distinction between actual fact and the play of imagination was not found out; their own notions of the divine nature seemed to the Greeks to be gods, and they played with them by the light of their own fancy; but as time went on, they tested the appearance, and realised with distress and bewilderment, that it had ceased to satisfy them. The *Prometheus* of Aeschylus is the eternal Protestant, unconvinced and defiant; Euripides is full of protest:

> Gods should be kinder and more just than men,

says the faithful servant in Hippolytus, when the action of the goddess is likely to be particularly petty and spiteful; and Hecuba in the *Women of Troy* says:

> Ye Gods—Alas! why call on things so weak for aid?

The philosophers threw over the old belief in gods, now seen to be false, and again tried to interpret things according to their new and enlarged view of them; but however much their view of them was enlarged, it still consisted of the interpretation of observed facts; and it was because more facts were recognised that the interpretation had to be changed. So in its best time Greek thought consisted of an interpretation of facts, accurately observed, so far as was possible, and honestly considered; and the

Greeks brought to their task the clearest and most well-balanced minds that the human race has yet produced. Even in the end, when the glory of original thought had died out, the habit of collecting facts was left, without the power of putting them together and building on them; and the Athenians of the first century A.D. told and heard new things, and had no further use for them[1].

The Indian philosophers, on the contrary, had no interest in outward things for their own sake, but left them on one side, and went on to look for the knowledge of the ultimate only; and when they wanted to put that knowledge into a comprehensible form, they travestied facts. When they described the universe as a beehive, the resulting picture left an equally vague impression of both terms; the wonder of the universe was expressed in a tangle of honeycombs, gods and colours; and the wonder of the actual beehive disappears[2]. Indian thought has fallen into the snare in part because of its own strength, because it realised its own limitations too early, and knew that we can never attain certainty through intellectual processes only; so it lost heart, and ended in the search for mere peace, for the end of desire, not its fulfilment.

[1] Acts xvii. 21.

[2] Chhând. 3, 1 ff. Compare Bṛih. 2, 5.

PERSIA

Two ancient nations, and two only, developed in a different way, and held a certain belief which in the end outgrew all their other beliefs, and opened the way to a new world of thought altogether—the belief that God is at any rate all that we mean by a person, that he has purpose, and distinguishes between good and evil, and that this is the most fundamental thing we know about him. The history of this idea fell out very differently in these two races.

The great prophet of Persia, Zarathushtra, taught it so plainly that those who came after have never quite lost sight of it; but no one was able to carry on his teaching, and in the course of ages it shrank instead of developing. We have Zarathushtra's own teaching in a series of seventeen hymns, the Gathas, which are preserved in the Avesta. These hymns seem to have been written by him, or sometimes by his immediate friends, in the course of the wars carried on under his inspiration, to free the Iranians from the attacks of robber tribes.

The character he attributes to the supreme God is quite different from that of any Indian God except Varuṇa, and of any Greek God except Zeus; and it differs widely from both Zeus and Varuṇa. Ahura Mazdah is perfectly just and wise as Varuṇa

almost always is, and Zeus at his best moments; but he has none of the lower side of Zeus, the constant amours, the liability to be tricked, the personal jealousies and quarrels that mark Zeus at once as a nature god and as the copy of a Greek hero. There is in Ahura Mázdah no connection with sun or rain; and if his name points to some relation with the sky, no trace of it is left in the image presented to us by Zarathushtra. Especially there is in him no remotest suggestion of consort or children, either celestial or earthly.

Ahura differs from Varuṇa as well in the much greater development of the idea of goodness associated with him. With Varuṇa we are never positively told what it was that had turned him against Vasishṭha; we hear in a general way that he punishes falsehood, but it is only in one hymn that we find particulars given[1]. Ahura, on the other hand, commands Zarathushtra not only to abstain from gross and obvious sins, which indeed do not seem to have tempted him much, but to undertake the arduous life of a prophet and guardian of his people, to teach them to choose good and refuse evil, for:

> Between these two (the better and the bad) the wise once chose aright, the foolish not so. Ys. 30, 3.

and to show them how to protect themselves in a life of husbandry and the care of cattle. Zarathushtra's

[1] Rigv. 7, 86.

ideal for his people is clear and positive; he demands industry, a good life in thought, word and deed, and the knowledge of Ahura. The prophet himself accepts hardship with the deliberate intention of serving his people:

I...will, while I have power and strength, teach men to seek after right. Ys. 28, 4.

an intention which the people received apparently with anything but gratitude, at any rate in the beginning, for the Ox Soul indignantly complains:

That I must be content with the ineffectual word of an impotent man for my protector, when I wish for one that commands mightily! Ys. 29, 9[1].

But it is not only through his demands on man that we are shown the character of Ahura. The vision of him, as described by Zarathushtra is a most unusual one. While family relationships are conspicuously absent, he is surrounded by a group of attendant figures, who reveal his character; what they actually are it is hard to say; in the later religion some of them become archangels; in Zarathushtra's own writings we cannot finally say whether they are independent persons or qualities; some are more and some less closely connected with Ahura; he is sometimes called their father, sometimes their creator; they are sometimes immanent in mankind.

[1] The Gathas belong to the collection of Yasnas. The translations are taken from Moulton's *Early Zoroastrianism*.

They are Right, Good Thought, Dominion, Piety, Health, Immortality, the Ox Soul, the Ox Creator, Obedience, Fire and others; and we learn from them that Zarathushtra thought of Ahura as manifesting himself in goodness and health of mind and body, in power and in the demand for honesty of life. Of outward magnificence, gold, garlands, palaces, chariots, weapons or any outward appearance at all, we hear nothing.

The traditional date for Zarathushtra's life is 660 to 583 B.C., about the time of Jeremiah, and of some of the later Upanishads, and a little earlier than the Buddha; but some recent scholarship puts it much earlier, in the second millennium B.C., perhaps in the same general period as Moses, and the arrival of the Aryans in India[1]. The fate of his religion has been most singular. It left a mark on the thought of his people that nothing has effaced, and to this day the Parsis worship God as one and holy; but no second prophet brought this thought into such close contact with actual life as Zarathushtra had done. The old nature-worship that he had thrust out[2] came back; the vision of Zarathushtra was reduced to precise rule; the idea of moral purity shrank into the idea of ceremonial

[1] See Dr Moulton's writings, *Early Persian Poetry*, *Early Zoroastrianism*, etc.

[2] See Yasna 32, especially *v.* 18.

purity; and the whole religion passed from various political causes, under the control of a foreign tribe, the Magi, who established themselves as its priests, and introduced customs of their own, which were no part of the original doctrine; so that from Zoroastrianism it became Magianism, and from a living religion, it became largely a system of magic. This change was completed by the time of Darius Hystaspes, 521 to 485 B.C.; and to this day Parsism survives as a blend of these two conceptions, the thought of Zarathushtra and the thought of the Magi.

ISRAEL

In Israel the thought of a God of righteousness is carried much further. This conception did not however reveal itself clearly at first, indeed the first idea of Jahve is not so free from connection with lower things as, in the mind of Zarathushtra, the idea of Ahura Mazdah appears to have been. This is natural, as we have in the books of the Hebrew Bible the record, not of the thoughts of a single man, as in the case of the Gathas, but of a whole race. There are indeed not many traces of nature-worship in connection with Jahve, but he[1] seems

[1] In speaking of the God of Israel it is customary to use a capital H in the words He and Him as an indication of the reverence due to the true God. For the special purpose of this book I have ventured to omit this, so as not to seem to claim any position

to have been thought of as inhabiting special places, Mount Sinai, or his temple at Jerusalem; and the worship of the golden 'calves'[1] and the brazen serpent[2] shows the strength of the temptation towards this way of thinking. Outward appearance is attributed to him, sometimes with the simplicity of the story of Eden[3], sometimes with hesitation, as in the story of Abraham and the Three men[4], sometimes with yet more hesitation and restraint, as in the vision in which the writer speaks only of a sapphire pavement under his feet, without any further particulars[5]; and we find the same tone in the visions of Isaiah[6] and Ezekiel[7], where the prophet is evidently struggling with the difficulty of either using or rejecting images. In other passages outward appearance is put aside altogether; when the vision of the 'back parts' has been promised to Moses[8], the revelation actually given is of the name of the Lord, a proclamation of moral qualities[9]; and to Elijah it is a voice, not a vision, that brings revelation[10]. Some minds rise above others in their conceptions; but to all, the outward appearance,

for the religion of Israel other than what it is hoped will appear from the substance of the argument. In using this spelling I am following the example set by the printers of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer.

[1] Exodus xxxii. 4. [2] 2 Kings xviii. 4. [3] Genesis ii.
[4] Genesis xviii. [5] Exodus xxiv. 10. [6] Isaiah vi.
[7] Ezekiel i. 27. [8] Exodus xxxiii. 33. [9] Exodus xxxiv. 6.
[10] 1 Kings xix. 12.

whether it exists or not, is a matter of secondary importance, and the moral character is the essential revelation.

Here, as in the Persian religion, there is a complete absence of any suggestion of a consort. This is a fact so familiar to us that we may lose sight of its significance; but both in Israel and in Persia it marks a deep divergence from the thought of either Greek or Indian official religion. In Greece sex is among the most prominent features of the gods; in Vedic India, though the divine consorts are but shadowy beings, and the divine mothers only a little less unimportant, the gods themselves are distinctly masculine. The worship of the vital impulse makes sex a matter of overwhelming importance. In Israel the only wife or child of Jahve is the ideal nation of Israel; and the use of the image in this connection is not a myth, but a parable, introduced to enforce a lesson of gratitude or obedience[1]. It is readily changed for some other, and Israel may be wife in one verse and child in the next, and an animal or a flock of sheep directly after[2].

But the conception of Jahve was never that of a mere nature-god; it was much nearer to that of a national god—a God of battles and Lord of Hosts—who chose the Israelites and made a covenant

[1] Hosea ii. and xi. 1. Isa. l. Jer. iii.

[2] Hosea xi. 4.

with them, so that they became his people, not by natural descent, but by choice and agreement. But this idea was not the final one. One of the most striking moments of Israelite history occurs when it passes into the higher one of Jahve as god of the whole world. The change was not due to philosophy, to any desire to account for the origin or destiny of the universe, but took place only in view of common life. The earliest statement of this doctrine is found in the book of Amos; and here it arises only from moral considerations. Because God is righteous, he hates sin, not only among the Hebrews but everywhere; and he will punish it in all, and most severely among those who know him best; and as he punishes it in all, he is therefore seen to be the God of all. Here is philosophy, unconscious of itself, and appearing as action; and here, as with Zarathushtra, the close concern of Jahve, as of Ahura, with the affairs of common life, marks a second deep divergence from the thought of Greece or India. According to the one conception the ultimate reality is that unknown force which we are, yet of which we can say nothing, only we recognise it by thought; according to the other, he is a living person, not ourselves, but closely interested in us, who knows and weighs every action, word and thought, and whom we learn to know and recognise by means of loyalty.

we have no right to condemn any school of thought in its weakest form without looking to what it is capable of producing at its best. Hebrew thought, whether higher or lower, rests altogether on the conception of a God whose essential character is shown in the distinction between right and wrong, and in the necessity of good conduct. This conception, though it seems to have arisen out of merely practical considerations, supplied the element missing in all other human thought, and the motive without which philosophy cannot come to life in religion. Indeed, though the Hebrews never detected it themselves, there is a philosophy latent in their religion which in the end proved to be the only rival to that of India.

THE VALUE OF INDIAN THOUGHT

The great value of Indian thought is that it brings the controversy of ages to an issue which grows clearer as we dwell on it. India has stated the argument for necessity, and has put it in practice, so far as it can possibly be done, for three thousand years. Western thought has accepted Hebrew guidance; it acts on the assumption of free-will, and has announced its belief in God as a person. This belief it holds, occasionally, inconsistently, confusing it with savage superstitions, forgetting it, and misrepresenting it. Succeeding generations have revolted

from the intellectual idols bequeathed to them, and have set up more of their own; yet all have this common feature, that each man has attributed to God what was at the moment his own highest idea of goodness.

To such conceptions India has opposed a continual challenge. It declares that the ultimate is incomprehensible, and that all experience is illusion. Not that India in its time has not also sought God by way of the affections. After the period of the Gītā the Bhakti religions arose, which consisted of the worship of Çiva or Vishṇu with devotion, amounting to passion; but like the thought of the philosophers, the passion of the devotee was something apart from conduct. The original Bhakti saints longed for deliverance from their own sins; but in the long run, the Bhakti religions brought no moral reformation to the country at large.

The East and the West try one another's theories, and compel one another to test foundations anew. Now there is one line of thought in the sacred books of India which we have looked at from time to time. It has been ignored by Indian teachers, and lies in the Vedas, in the Upanishads, and in the Gītā, neglected and barren, and yet capable or repaying investigation. It consists in the appeal to the common sense of right; and it involves far-reaching results, results which reach so far that they

may even undermine the whole stately system of the Upanishads. The doctrine of the one real being, of necessity, illusion, and impersonality has been tried to the utmost; and it has broken down on the side of daily life.

It seems that our choice lies between believing that personal character is nothing or is all. In early Indian thought we have the boldest and the most consistent effort that the human mind has ever made to show that it is nothing; and the effort has failed. Thought may yet learn a lesson from life that shall end, not in failure, but in hope.

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